



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

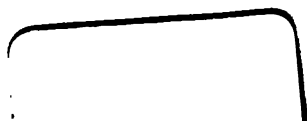
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600056554V



100

REGINALD LYLE.

BY MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

249. x. 422.

LONDON:
Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

REGINALD LYLE.

CHAPTER I.

HERE AND THERE.

THERE was a buoyant step upon the pavement of a little street in Walworth; a firm hand upon the knocker of the modest house with which the reader has already made acquaintance; a rustling of female drapery in the narrow passage; a key turned; a latch lifted; and Octavius Lyle bounded across the threshold, and

seizing his hostess by both hands, exclaimed joyously :

“Congratulate me ; I am the happiest man alive !”

“You don’t say so, Mr. Lyle ! How delighted I am ! But what *has* happened ?”

“Well may you ask, my good friend ;” said the sorely-trying young man, a transient shadow passing over his handsome face ; “well may you ask, for I have given you few such riddles to read ; but I am to be lucky at last. Only imagine ! I have been promised a clerkship in an old-established bank, with a salary of ninety pounds a-year ; and the condition upon which the offer was made is so easy that I accepted it at once.”

“This is news indeed ! What a pity

that Richard is not at home to hear it? But how on earth did this good fortune fall in your way?"

"That will, I think, be your second surprise. My *patron*—ha! ha! it is really too good a joke!"—and the nephew of the proud Mexican merchant laughed half scornfully and half hysterically—"my patron is no other than the old curmudgeon Robinson, whom Trevor and I—may we be forgiven for the heresy!—have been abusing for the last six months."

"Mr. Robinson the grocer?"

"Even so. Look you—*my* friend—*your* friend—everybody's friend—Mr. Robinson the grocer, had, like many others, I dare say, of the London tradesmen, a goodly array of what he technically denominated *bad debts* in his books, when I



600056554V



make myself responsible for the debt, should the good genius by whom I am to be enriched decline to liquidate it at the termination of the six months; and to continue my services to Robinson himself without any further remuneration."

"Well," said the hostess, drawing a long sigh of relief; "that is better than I hoped; for I knew at once that Robinson must be a gainer in some way or other by the arrangement; I do congratulate you with all my heart; and so will Richard when he comes home. But now I think of it, had you not better go to Lincoln's Inn at once? You will make him so happy."

"I had already thought of doing so; but I believe that I must defer my tale to him until this evening, as I am re-

quired to furnish two securities in £1,000 each, for my good behaviour, you know, and to prevent my eloping with the cash-box!" And again the excited young man laughed like a school-boy. "So I had better not lose time; for, although the thing will be easy enough, still people must be requested to do one so important a service; and therefore I am going to don my best coat, and set forth."

"I wish that Richard had been competent?" said Mrs. Trevor, rather uttering her thoughts than addressing her companion.

"And so do I, with all my heart;" responded Lyle; "but unhappily in these business affairs men are not estimated by what they are, but by what they have; and consequently I must ask a favour

elsewhere, which would have been offered, as I well know, by my good friend Trevor."

"And whom do you mean to ask; if, indeed, you will excuse my making the inquiry?"

"My cousin Lancaster in the first place, of course;" replied Octavius; "for, as you know, he lately offered me a hundred pounds for my fit-out, if I made up my mind to emigrate; so that he will, beyond all doubt, willingly render me a still greater service, which, moreover, cannot cost him a guinea."

"So far, so well; there is one security found;" said methodical little Mrs. Trevor; "and now whom have you fixed upon as the other?"

"Who but dear old Aunt Pen?"

"That will not do, my dear Sir. Miss Penelope Lyle enjoys, if I have rightly understood, a life annuity of two hundred a-year, but she has no command over the principal; and I fear that her economies—"

"You are quite right, Mrs. Trevor, quite right; she has been far too liberal to me to have saved much. How could I be so thoughtless! and what am I to do now, for another security must be found?"

"Would not your uncle—?"

"My uncle! I would sooner beg my bread than solicit a favour of Mr. Lyle. No, no; *he* is proud and happy to find himself surrounded by prosperous relatives; *he* would have been mortified and disgusted, had he been compelled to see any one who

bore his name in penury ; I heard him say as much. Not a word of my uncle ; I must look elsewhere for help."

"That is unfortunate. However, do not despair. Reflect for a moment. What say you to your other cousin ?"

"Mr. Percival Lyle ? True ; for although my poverty has doubtlessly long been as distasteful to him as to my uncle, he has at least had the good taste to keep his annoyance to himself ; and if he has not served me, he has spared my feelings. Your suggestion is an excellent one, my dear Mrs. Trevor ; so now I will make myself presentable, and call on my two cousins."

"Wait one moment more. Suppose—you know I only say *suppose*—but suppose that Mr. Percival should plead his family

as an excuse—I mean, as a reason for not meeting your views in this matter ; where could you next apply ?”

“ Oh, surely such a precaution is needless ; I only ask for his name ; the concession will cost him nothing.”

“ Very true ; but men of business are always so very cautious, and so jealous of lending their names ; and, remember, my dear Mr. Lyle—I am sure you will excuse me—remember that he has never in any one instance shown a disposition to assist you. *Do* reflect if you cannot find a third party ; only, you know, in the event of disappointment.”

“ Well, in order to satisfy your very kind anxiety, my good Mrs. Trevor, I will ; although I cannot believe that my own relatives will fail me at such a crisis as

this; it would be too cruel; but if they really should do so, I have still a resource, as Mr. Brunton desired me, when I met him in Hertford Street, to apply to him in any emergency where his services might be made available."

"Then all difficulty is at an end;" said his hostess cheerfully; "you are sure of Mr. Lancaster; and as to Mr. Brunton, he is the very soul of truth and generosity. If he said *that*, he is pledged to you; for he never forfeits his word. Had you not better go to him at once?"

"Perhaps so;" replied Octavius; "I dare say that might be the wisest course; but it is so very difficult to ask favours, especially out of one's own family, that I would rather——"

"Yes; no doubt you are right; and where

there is so little risk of failure, I agree with you that the attempt should be made. But I will not detain you ; for I shall be so very, very glad to congratulate you on your return home."

A happy, a very happy man was Octavius Lyle, as merrily carolling a popular air, he hastily changed his dress, and in ten minutes more set forth upon his fateful errand. He did not feel the chill, bleak wind : how should he ? when with dancing pulse and bounding heart, he bent his way towards London. How unusually bright everything looked about him ! The foot-passengers who jostled him as they passed, all seemed bound on some business as pleasant as his own. The shops were full of treasures ; not all perhaps to be long unattainable ; and then he thought of Mrs. Trevor's solitary silk gown, and re-

membered her favourite colour, and smiled as he fancied her delight, when he should present her with a new one precisely of the shade that she preferred. And his young pupil; what a triumph it would be to make him the possessor of an Euclid all his own! And his heavy debts to Trevor, all to be cancelled out of his first year's salary—for of course Robinson's debtor would act like an honest man, and settle his long-pending account at the stipulated time—and his good, affectionate Aunt Pen, so soon to be relieved from the heavy burden of his necessities—and—but why endeavour to follow the current of his joyous and busy thoughts as he hurried on? Life is full of such dreams, and blessed indeed are they who are the last to awaken to its realities!

Such was the buoyant mood of mind in which the sanguine young man at length reached the —— Office, over one department of which Mr. Joseph Lancaster reigned supreme ; and having sent in his name, he was forthwith conducted to a snug apartment, where, seated at a large table, with his back to a blazing fire, and a pen in his hand, he found the well-salaried relative, on whose good offices he had built up his brilliant cloud-castle of future independence.

“Glad to see you, cousin, glad to see you;” was the greeting of the public functionary, as, without rising from his chair, he extended two fingers to his visitor.

“You are of course come to tell me that you are about to follow my advice. Well, I am prepared to be as good as my word ; and if you will pledge yourself to sail im-

mediately, I will, on your producing the order for your passage, give you a cheque for a hundred pounds upon my banker. It is true that when I originally made the offer, I did so on condition that you should not expose your necessities to Mr. Reginald Lyle ; but as you appear to me rather to have injured than advanced your interests by that ill-judged visit, I will not disappoint your hopes. Secure your passage, and you shall have the money."

"I am really very grateful to you, Mr. Lancaster ;" said Octavius, taking possession of a seat ; "but I hope that there now exists no reason for me to intrude so far upon your kindness."

"What, has Miss Pen volunteered to pay all your expenses ?" was the eager inquiry.

“Neither, I am thankful to say, am I compelled to trespass further upon her generosity. No ; it is true that I am here to ask a favour, but my request involves no question of money.”

The government official became fidgetty, and passed the pen which he still held so rapidly across the palm of his left hand, that it gave out a sharp, nervous, teeth-torturing sound, very disagreeable to the ear.

“The fact is,” pursued Lyle ; “that I have been offered a clerkship in an old-established banking-house, with a salary of ninety pounds a-year ; but in order to hold it, I must provide two securities in £1,000 each ; and I am here to-day to express to you how grateful I shall feel if, instead of the pecuniary assistance which you so

liberally tendered to me, you will do me the favour to become one of the said securities."

A cloud gathered upon the brow of Mr. Lancaster, and he thrust his spectacles so high above their legitimate position, that they half buried themselves in his bristly hair. He was silent for a moment. It was the lull before the storm.

"Young man;" he said at length, as his visitor sat watching him with undisguised wonder; "I can only attribute so unheard-of an application to your total ignorance of the world, or to your habitual recklessness. You do not appear to appreciate the importance of what you ask; you do not appear to have a right perception of the magnitude of your request. You can know nothing of business, or you

would be aware that a prudent man never affixes his name to any document, by which his credit may be impaired, or his honour involved."

"I do not understand you, Mr. Lancaster."

"I dare say not, Sir; I should have been surprised, if you *had* done so. But perhaps you can answer me a simple question. Pray, what do you imagine that I can discover in your antecedents to induce me to risk a thousand pounds in order to indulge you in a new caprice?"

"I will answer your question by another quite as simple: pray, what can you discover in any action of my past life calculated to deter you from assisting me?"

"Everything, young man; everything. Whatever you attempt, fails. You are

always in difficulty; always in distress; and at the age of two-and-twenty, in a world where there is enough and to spare for all, you are little better than a beggar. My only astonishment is that you should come to ME for assistance! What have you ever done for ME?"

"I will tell you what I have done;" retorted Octavius vehemently; "I have striven to remember that you were the son of my father's sister, when your wretched selfishness and neglect of those of your own blood might well have excused me, had I forgotten it. I have given you credit for the feelings of a man, when I ought long ago to have learnt that you could only feel for yourself. I have treated you with respect as my relative and my senior in years,

when I ought to have regarded you only with contempt; and thus, Sir, you will perceive that, however unconsciously, you are still deeply in my debt."

"Admirable! Excellent! You are truly a very promising scion of the house of Lyle; an undoubted honour to the blood of which you boast;" said the gentleman under government, vainly endeavouring to master his emotion. "Am I to understand that you came here to insult me?"

"It would rather appear that I came to be insulted;" said Octavius; "but calm yourself, Mr. Lancaster; the name of which you are so chary shall never be endangered by me; for now I thoroughly appreciate your worth, I should scorn to see it coupled with my own, even although it were to save me from a jail."

"I trust that you may be enabled to dispense with it;" muttered the man of business with a sneer.

"I trust that I may. Good morning, Sir." And Lyle rose haughtily from his seat.

"You are mad, Sir, irrevocably mad!" exclaimed Mr. Lancaster with nervous agitation. "Have you already forgotten that only a few days ago I offered to give you—do you hear me?—to *give* you, a hundred pounds if you thought proper to emigrate? Was that coldbloodedness? Was that selfishness?"

"One and both;" said Octavius contemptuously. "Mad as you think proper to consider me, I was at least sufficiently sane to appreciate the motive of your seeming generosity."

“What do you mean by my motive? What motive could I have in giving away my money?”

“Shall I tell you? The very evident one of absenting me from England, when you dreaded that I might interfere with your interests. Mr. Reginald Lyle is an old man, and a wealthy man; and he *might* have had a regard for the name which you appear to hold so lightly. At all events, it was a safe game; a very safe game; and, as a man of business, you deserve credit for your ingenuity.”

“But if I repeat the offer now that you are in disgrace with Mr. Lyle?”

“I shall still be of the same opinion. I have done nothing to incur the displeasure to which you allude. And on reflection

Mr. Lyle may himself admit this. Be that as it may, however, after what has just passed between us, I would sooner cut off my right hand than suffer it to close over a single coin that had ever called you master."

"That is your final determination?"

"My firm and unalterable resolve."

"Beware lest you repent. I will still give you five minutes to reflect."

"I do not ask five seconds ; nor will I even now forget that you are my relative ; but if it were not so——"

"What then?"

"Why then I would take my leave after a different fashion. As it is, I once more bid you good morning, Mr. Lancaster ; and I do it civilly, for it is in all proba-

bility the last sentence which I shall ever address to you."

The first throw of the dice had thus been a losing one.

CHAPTER II.

WIN OR LOSE.

It was with a far less buoyant step than that with which he had left his home, that Octavius Lyle pursued his way to Bedford Square. One fold of the curtain had been raised, and he had obtained a glimpse of that real world which reveals itself so coldly and so bleakly to the sanguine and the young, who are ever prone to anticipate that the promised good is to be seized

at once in its full fruition, as Minerva sprang into life from the brain of Jove. The lesson had been a bitter one ; the more bitter because it had been wholly unanticipated. Generous to a fault, utterly regardless of self, and ever ready to extend a succouring hand to others, the warm-hearted young man was unable to realize the disappointment to which he had been subjected ; and as he gradually overcame the indignation which the egotism of his relative had elicited, his spirit sank, and he began to have misgivings, which, like the shadows that haunted the tent of Richard, filled him with apprehension and dismay.

More than once he paused, and asked himself if he should indeed persist in his purpose, and perhaps subject himself to a repetition of the outrage which he had

already endured : but in every case the question was answered by the beloved vision of Alice—*his* Alice—whom he could only hope to win, when he had proved himself worthy of her by his efforts to offer her a home. A poor one it might be—it must be—but still a home. He could not owe *all* to her ; his manhood forbade it ; and so he again moved onward, and crushed down his rebellious pride, and strove to hope, and to feel a renewed trust in his fellow-men ; but the effort was a painful one, and thus he reached his destination, depressed and desponding.

Mr. Percival Lyle was at home ; and his relative was ushered into what was facetiously called his study ; where, in dressing-gown and slippers—for the merchant, who was at that time not particularly anxious to make himself too con-

spicuous in the city, had deemed it expedient to labour under an attack of influenza—he found his cousin and namesake, with sundry letters and papers, and a tumbler of barley-water, occupying the table near him.

“Ha, Octavius, my dear fellow, how are you?” exclaimed the merchant condescendingly, as he motioned to him to take a seat; “I was thinking of you half an hour ago; I was, I assure you. Why, you foolish boy, how badly you played your cards in Hertford Street; it quite annoyed me; it did, upon my honour.”

“You are very good, Mr. Lyle.”

“Oh, you must no longer call me Mr. Lyle; I am superseded, you know, by the Mexican nabob, and must fall back upon my baptismal appellation, which fortunately

is sonorous enough. I am an invalid, as you see. Dr. Davis has absolutely forbidden me to leave the house; he says that I am not equal to business, and that exposure to the external air would aggravate the attack; so here I am, nailed to my arm-chair, just at the very moment when my presence is absolutely essential in the counting-house. However, I suppose I must submit; and I am doing my best to support the infliction with patience."

"I trust that your prudence will tend to shorten your sufferings. I am truly sorry to see you such an invalid."

"It is a bore; but what is to be done? Barley-water is a poor substitute for sherry; but we are all mortal, my dear fellow, and we must submit."

"A painful truism!" said Octavius, with

a smile; "I hope that Mrs. Percival and your daughters have escaped this almost universal scourge."

"Yes, thank you, I believe so. Mrs. Percival has driven out to make calls—"

Mrs. Percival was, *par parenthèse*, as we may as well chronicle at once, one of those busily-idle persons who spend half their lives in making calls. It was in vain that at door after door she met the stereotyped answer, "Not at home;" it never interfered in the least with her cherished mania. Day by day she donned her flounces and her feathers, and pursued her ordinary avocation of acquaintance-hunting; and many were the pasteboard records of her perseverance, which, with a heroism worthy of a better cause, she scattered over the London streets and squares. So earnest, indeed, was she in her vocation, that some

among her more intimate associates were wont to declare that she would solicit an hour's respite upon her death-bed, in order that she might have an opportunity of distributing her P.P.C.'s.—But this is a digression.

“As to my daughters;” continued Mr. Percival with a marked assumption of dignity; “they never receive visitors when their mother is from home. Miss Stapleton is rigid upon that point; and we never interfere with her arrangements. Indeed, we were singularly fortunate to secure such a monitress for our young people, even although we pay tolerably high for the privilege of possessing her; as she had never previously consented to enter the family of a commoner. But with money, you know, my dear fellow, one is enabled to overcome all difficulties; and

having succeeded, we are naturally anxious to let her have her own way in every particular."

There was a pause ; a trying one to Octavius ; but at length he spoke.

"Mr. Lyle—"

The merchant smiled benignly ; he was flattered by what he assumed to be a feeling of unconquerable respect in his young kinsman.

"Well, what are you about to say ?"

"Inquire rather what I am going to ask ;" said Octavius, forcing a smile, and endeavouring to appear unconstrained ; "for, to be frank with you, I am about to solicit a favour."

"Ha, indeed !" And the dark eyebrows met portentously.

"Yes, truly ; and yet not one which

will place me under pecuniary obligations to your kindness."

"Good. You want me to heal the breach between you and our uncle ; but it won't do, my dear fellow. I assure you, on — my — honour —" and Mr. Percival Lyle lingered over the asseveration as though he were pledging all that was dearest to him in the world ; "that if you had only witnessed the scene which took place after you left the house, you would feel the utter impossibility of a reconciliation. The old gentleman was furious at what he termed your insolence—the insolence of a poor relation—and you can form no conception of his violence when it is once aroused. Not, mind you, that I blame *you*, my dear boy ;" continued the urbane and indulgent gentleman ; "I con-

sider that your conduct was just what it should have been — open, fearless, and spirited! I was proud of you; I was, upon my honour. Such a contrast from those sneaks the Staintons, who were afraid to utter a word awry lest they should lose a legacy. Not, however”—he pursued confidentially; “that they need have troubled themselves upon the subject, as I happen to know that none of the Mexican gold will go to gild the school-forms at Clapham; for, as a matter of course, the pride of old Lyle revolted at the ‘fashionable establishment.’”

“But the sons—” interposed Octavius.

“Ay, the sons;” echoed his companion contemptuously; “two pretty fellows, are they not, to do away with such an impression? Why, they have not spirit enough to escape from the stocks and back-

board of their manœuvring mother, when she is pleased to inflict her displeasure upon them. No, no ; I soon saw what the nabob thought of *them*. They have no chance."

"You are rapidly narrowing the circle."

"I speak advisedly, Octavius. I have great experience of life ; and Mr. Lyle, whatever may be his commercial abilities—which, judging by the result, must be considerable—is a perfect child in worldly matters. He betrays himself every instant. I watched him narrowly ; for, as you know, I have also a stake in this venture, and I naturally gave the subject my best consideration ; so that I very soon detected his antipathies."

"It was not, however, to trouble you upon that subject that I intruded on you to-day ;" said Octavius, evading all comment

upon the self-gratulation of his pompous cousin; "for, circumstanced as I am, it would be impossible for me to make advances to Mr. Lyle. He might misinterpret my motive, and I cannot condescend to cringe to any man's wealth."

"Right, right, my dear fellow; a very proper and commendable feeling on your part."

"My business is therefore solely with yourself. As I before remarked, it involves no application for money. I am well aware that, whatever may be the resources of individuals extensively engaged in commerce, no one has a right to ask a pecuniary favour which might be conferred at an inconvenient moment. What I come to request is, that you will be good enough to become one of my securities; and, by so doing, enable me

to obtain a respectable income as clerk in a banking-house."

"And who is to be the other?"

"I am not, I regret to say, enabled to answer the question decidedly; but I have no doubt that a second will be secured in the course of the day. I *had* calculated upon our cousin Lancaster, but he has failed me."

"Upon what pretext?"

"He is anxious that I should emigrate to Australia."

"And he is right. A very prudent, far-sighted man is Joseph Lancaster. He knows that all professions are overstocked at home; and that a fine, energetic young man, who has to make his way in the world, has an opening in the gold regions which he must be insane to neglect. Take

his advice, Octavius; take his advice—it is admirable.”

And the merchant inhaled a huge pinch of snuff from a richly-chased and enamelled box.

“By Jove, I never felt so great a respect for Lancaster’s understanding before. Go, of course. I will pay your passage; though I have, as you know, an expensive family—a *very* expensive family—but, on such an occasion, to further the fortunes of so near a relation, and because I have moreover a great personal regard for yourself, I will undertake to defray the expenses of your passage, so that you need not encroach on your own funds. When do you think it likely that you shall leave England?”

“I will try the Bank first.”

“Then you are mad, quite mad! Have

you read the "Times" of yesterday? The quantity of gold shipped at Melbourne is positively fabulous! I expect good interest for my advance, in the shape of brooches and earrings for Mrs. Percival and the girls, I assure you."

"And your name meanwhile as one of my securities, Mr. Lyle?"

"Impossible, my dear fellow. Impossible. Like Joseph Lancaster, I am a prudent man. Anything that I can say for you—although even that, in point of fact, cannot, as you are aware, amount to much; for (if the truth must be told, I actually know very little about you), still, what I *can* say in your behalf, I *will* say; and I am not unconscious of the risk of saying anything in such cases; but I shall not hesitate, nevertheless, trusting that your future conduct will be such as to justify my confi-

dence. The act of putting my pen to paper in emergencies like that under consideration, is, however, peculiarly obnoxious to me ; and I consequently feel too much delicacy to mislead you for an instant on a point of so much importance to your future prospects ; while I confess that I decline with the less reluctance, from an innate conviction that you have too keen a sense of your own dignity to accept a service grudgingly rendered. Of that fact, your manly conduct the other evening in Hertford Street has perfectly satisfied me. I am sorry, very sorry to disappoint you, but my principles are altogether contrary to such a concession."

" You refuse, then ?"

" I am compelled to do so. I must be consistent. I pride myself upon my consistency. I never became security for any

one in the whole course of my life ; I didn't, upon my honour."

"I will not intrude upon you further, Mr. Lyle."

"Oh, do not name that, my dear boy ; I am happy to see you ; and Mrs. Percival would have been happy to see you, had she not driven out to make calls ; and the young ladies also, but Miss Stapleton is averse to their wasting their time, especially of a morning, otherwise—"

"Spare yourself all apologies, Mr. Lyle ;" said Octavius haughtily ; "they are quite unnecessary. I will not detain you longer. I wish you good morning."

"Good morning, my dear Octavius, good morning. Now don't be wrong-headed, but think over Lancaster's advice, and my advice. Australia will be the making of you ; there you will have a clear field ; while

here, in London, you will find so many people in your way."

"That is a tolerably universal fate, I imagine, Mr. Lyle. At least I perceive, that insignificant as I may be, I am myself in the way of other people. But, after all, the struggle is exciting enough; and I at least, for one, will not be the coward to shrink from it."

"Poor, misguided boy!" And Mr. Percival Lyle sighed as though he could scarcely support the pressure of his feelings. "With such an opening before you, I cannot conceive how you can hesitate for a moment. You have already experienced the utter impossibility of making your way in London—for as to inducing any safe and creditable individuals to take such a step as that which you request, you may rely upon *me* that it is a mere chimera—and yet when a brilliant

prospect opens before you, and that by your unaided exertions you are secure of rendering yourself independent in a few years, you actually refuse to avail yourself of so excellent an opportunity! However, I feel so sincere an interest in your welfare, that I shall hope to hear that you have become more judicious when you have taken time to reflect. And—remember—my word is my bond. The passage-money shall be forthcoming, whenever you are prepared to draw it.”

And so they parted.

CHAPTER III.

FRIEND OR FOE.

THE atmosphere had darkened ; the shops had lost their brightness ; the foot-passengers who thronged the pavement appeared bent upon impeding the progress of the disconsolate Octavius as he hurried away from the luxurious home of his cold-hearted kinsman. His hands were unconsciously clenched, and his teeth set. The bitterness of a lifetime were concentrated into that hour.

Whither next ?

The ties of blood ! What a mockery are they at such a moment. What did it avail to Octavius Lyle that he had a name and a family ? Was he not an outcast from home and heart at the very instant when he needed affection and assistance ? Was there one, among the thousands amid whom he made his way, more actually isolated than himself ? His spirit cried aloud within him ; but none heard that cry, for none cared to listen.

Strange, mysterious dispensation of Providence, that the weal or woe of the best and the purest should depend upon the possession or privation of a mass of yellow ore, trampled upon for centuries by the feet of men and the hoofs of cattle, to be brought to light at last, and erected into a deity ! Had Octavius Lyle suddenly become the recipient of a handsome fortune, Joseph Lan-

caster would have been ready to withdraw his hoarded hundreds from the bank, and to pour them into his lap. Percival Lyle, the bankrupt merchant, would have taken him to his heart, and have offered him one of his accomplished daughters in marriage; serious men would have raised their hats to him in the street as he passed along; and bright eyes would have smiled a recognition from chariot windows.

But it was not so; he was poor; and thus he passed on unheeded, without one word of kindness, or one glance of sympathy—on—on—through the dreary wilderness of London; through that worst of solitudes, a busy crowd; the tempter and the tempted, the deceiver and the deceived, the hopeful and the despairing, all were there, with a little world of feeling in every heart; the life-tide which throbbed in the

pulses of some among them leaping and dancing like the silver bubbles of the fairy tale ; and the dark stream that choked the others, stagnant as Lethe, and bitter as the waters of Marah.

And amid this chaos of humanity the soul-stricken young man pursued his gloomy path to Lincoln's Inn. Here lingered his last hope. Mr. Brunton had been so cordial, so profuse of promises. Surely he, at least, would not fail him ! Friendship might prove a firmer tie than kindred. Then he remembered Trevor, and felt encouraged as he confessed to himself that it had already done so. With a lighter step he ascended the dark staircase, and entered the outer office, where his friend, half buried amid a pile of parchments, did not even look up as the door swung back upon its ponderous hinges. One word, however, sufficed to

arouse him from his occupation ; and with a smile, half wonder and half welcome, he greeted his unexpected visitor.

The tale of Octavius was soon told ; and Trevor made no attempt to conceal his indignation.

“ Poor, mean-spirited worldlings !” he exclaimed contemptuously ; “ they little dream of the transparency of their base and selfish motives ; but ‘ the race is not always to the swift,’ and they may yet fail. Had they not one manly or generous feeling ? How facts like these teach a man to despise his fellows ! And now, what is your intention, Lyle ? You must not, by becoming prematurely disheartened, suffer so fortunate a chance to slip through your fingers. Where else can you apply ?”

“ Here,” said Octavius abruptly.

“ Here ! What, of Mr. Brunton ?”

"And why not? Did I not tell you that when I met him at my uncle's, he desired me to acquaint him with every circumstance which could tend to affect my prospects."

"True."

"And, moreover, that he bade me rely on his good offices, and place every confidence in his desire to serve me."

"I remember your saying so at the time."

"Well, then, do you condemn my present application?"

"No—I see nothing to condemn."

"Your manner is, however, cold and discouraging, Trevor. Do you apprehend that I shall be subjected to a third refusal? Be frank with me, as you have always been."

"I have no right, my dear Lyle, to dis-

ourage you. I cannot even advance the slightest reason for doing so ; and yet—”

“Speak out, Trevor—”

“Well, then, I cannot explain wherefore, but I have, nevertheless, a strong presentiment that your third application will prove a failure like the others.”

“Then—” commenced Octavius, as he sprang from his seat.

“Notwithstanding which,” pursued Trevor, heedless of the interruption ; “it is your duty to make it. You ask no favour by which you can be degraded or humiliated ; you simply request a service which may readily be conferred by one gentleman, and as readily accepted by another. I know the heart of Mr. Brunton to be sterling. I could tell you of a hundred acts of kindness ; disinterested, spontaneous kindness,

conferred by him upon others; and yet— I feel convinced that you must have some enemy, Lyle, who has calumniated you to him, for you are evidently no favourite.”

“Does there breathe a being on earth sufficiently interested in my existence to indulge in enmity against me, think you?” asked Octavius bitterly; “after my experience of to-day, I may be forgiven should I doubt it.”

“Calm yourself, Lyle; remember that all your future fortunes may hinge upon your success in this affair. You must go through your task like a man, and not indulge in the peevishness of a child. This is not your first trial, and hitherto you have borne up bravely. Perhaps I have been wrong to infect you with my own doubts. See Mr. Brunton at all events: for even should he decline to comply with your

request, you need not fear that he will wound your feelings."

"If you only knew what it costs me to ask, and to be refused"—and the voice of the unhappy young man trembled with emotion.

"Lyle;" said Trevor, rising from his seat, and laying his hand heavily upon the shoulder of his companion; "my dear Lyle, I forgive you, for I can appreciate the bitterness of your present feelings; but have you again forgotten *my* career? and can you believe, that with a wife and children looking to me for bread, I have not gone through many such seasons of suffering? I was once young as you are, proud as you are; dreaming of an impossible future, and struggling to invest the threatening present with a hope, not justified by any promise, however problematical; and I was compelled,

for the sake of those who loved me, and who trusted to me, to forget myself in their necessities. Have *you* no tie, no hope, no cherished vision strong enough, and bright enough, to induce you to do the like ?”

“Trevor ;” faltered Octavius, as he buried his face with all the confidingness of childhood on the breast of his friend—and the wrung heart ever relapses into infancy in the extremity of its first helplessness, however manhood and the pride of manhood may wrestle against the weakness ; “Trevor ; I will remember *your* trials—*your* struggles ; but the events of this day were so unforeseen—I had so firm a trust in human nature—I have been so cruelly deceived.”

“I know it ; but believe me, Lyle, when I tell you that life is full of these heart-

dramas ; the stage may be narrow, and the actors obscure ; but the pang is none the less keen, nor the catastrophe the less bitter."

"The sooner the curtain drops, then, the better," said Octavius gloomily.

"Perhaps so, for the weak ; but strength was given to man, because it was to be his lot to strive. Cheer up, Lyle ; all is not yet so desperate as you are inclined to believe under the first pressure of your disappointment. It is extraordinary how often in life good fortune treads upon the heels of bad."

"This from you, Trevor?"

"And why not?" asked his companion, assuming a hopefulness which was foreign to his conviction : "The world is full of these strange freaks of chance ; and my

turn may yet come, though it has been so long delayed. But, speaking of delay, I have detained you too much already, and will now announce your arrival to Mr. Brunton."

That ceremony was soon performed; the baize door closed after Trevor for an instant, and then once more fell back to afford ingress to the anxious petitioner, who found himself, ere he had well drawn another breath, in the presence of the redoubtable lawyer.

"Ha, Mr. Lyle, good-day—I have been long looking for a visit from you;" said Brunton cordially, as he rose from his seat, and after shaking hands with his young guest, and installing him in one of the ponderous chairs already described—chairs which looked as though they had even

outlived a Chancery suit—took up his own position on the dingy hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him, as if to imply that he had both time and inclination to devote himself to his visitor.

“As an idle man, I had hoped to have seen you here before; but it appears that your entrances are less speedily accomplished than your exits.”

Octavius smiled, but the smile was sad enough.

“Truly,” pursued the lawyer; “your exodus from Hertford Street was abrupt enough! How could you be so rash, my young friend? Were you not well aware that you were abandoning your colours when your enemies were in the camp?”

“I did not bestow a thought upon that

fact, Mr. Brunton. I considered myself insulted ; and as I could not revenge the affront, I was at least resolved to prevent its repetition."

"Folly ! young Sir, folly ! The days of Hotspur are over ; and you ought to have remembered how much you had at stake."

"I have no doubt that you are right ; but even now, when I have ascertained that by my imprudence I destroyed the small prospect of pleasing Mr. Lyle which I ever possessed, I confess that I cannot bring myself to repent the line of conduct which I then pursued."

"And may I ask what it is that you have ascertained ?"

"Simply that my independent bearing irritated my uncle, and that he declaimed loudly after my departure on the insolence

of poor relations ; a taunt which appears to me fully to justify the indignation of any generous spirit."

" And who told you this ?"

" Mr. Percival Lyle, scarcely an hour ago ; and while he sympathised with me, he rather justified than blamed my conduct."

" Mr. Percival Lyle is an acute man ; a capital man of business ;" said the lawyer sarcastically. " Did he also, as a proof of that sympathy which he so feelingly evinced, volunteer to reinstate you in the good graces of my client ?"

" He assured me, on the contrary, that every hope of a reconciliation between us was at an end."

" Mr. Percival Lyle is an admirable person. He was doubtlessly aware that no annoyance is so great as that which arises from disap-

pointed hope, and he was anxious to spare you any additional mortification. But your visit to me has been so long postponed, that you must hold me excused if I attribute it, now that it is at length paid, to some powerful motive. Are you here to ask my counsel or assistance."

"I am," said Octavius, encouraged by the inquiry.

"Well, speak out ; we are losing time."

And once more the agitated young man told his tale.

"So"—said Brunton, stroking his chin and looking his visitor steadily in the face ; "if I understand you rightly, both your cousins have declined to lend their names to the required document, and have advised you to emigrate ; now, although I am unfortunately also compelled to do the first, I by no means agree with them as to the last.

I cannot become one of your securities; but I strongly urge you not to leave England."

The emotion of Octavius almost suffocated him, but he struggled against it manfully.

"You will pardon me alike this intrusion and the liberty which I have taken, Mr. Brunton, I trust;" he said falteringly; "and at the same time, give me credit for the assurance that I should not have ventured upon either, had you not encouraged me to do so at our last meeting. I will no longer occupy your valuable time; but ere I take my leave, I consider it only proper to inform you, that having failed in procuring the securities demanded of me, I shall at once proceed to Australia, as I cannot any longer submit to exist upon the charity of others."

"Do not be hasty;" said the lawyer

deprecatingly ; “ but rather reflect calmly whether there may not be some other friend, less trammelled by circumstances than myself, who will consent to do you this favour.”

“ I am not aware of one ; nor, having failed with two of my nearest relatives, and a person who had volunteered to serve me, without any solicitation on my own part, do I feel disposed to subject myself to further mortification.”

“ A spirited resolve ; but still I say, do nothing rashly. Such a step as you contemplate will be irretrievable. People cannot return from the Antipodes by an express train, when they are weary of exile.”

“ True ;” replied Octavius ; “ but neither can they recover their self-respect when they have once lost it. A stout heart and a strong arm, neither of which avail in

England, may yet do me good service in another hemisphere ; and I must pursue my destiny."

The lawyer was silent, but there was a nervous twitching about his mouth which betrayed that he was not insensible to the despair of the unhappy young man before him. Perhaps he remembered at that moment that it was not alone the prospect of leaving his country which wrung the heart of Octavius, but that it must involve a parting still more painful ; and that as the shores of England faded from his sight, so also must every hope of winning the hand of Alice Ravensdale fade with them.

And yet, if it indeed were so, this passing pity wrought no relenting in the heart of the wealthy Mr. Brunton, by whom even the loss of a thousand pounds would have been

unfelt; who had neither wife, nor child, nor needy relative to inherit his well-won hoards. No; he remained inflexible, apparently waiting to be again addressed by his companion.

The pause was both painful and embarrassing to Octavius, who was anxious to suppress every demonstration of resentment; for he at once felt that where those who were knit to him by the ties of blood had failed, he had no right to anticipate greater consideration from a stranger, whatever might have been his previous professions; and there was, moreover, a tone of earnestness, and an expression of interest—though in what it actually consisted the poor young man could not have explained even to himself—in the manner of Mr. Brunton, which soothed rather than irritated his feelings. True, he was aware that he should leave the room as poor, as

hopeless, and as helpless as he had entered it ; but he also remembered that he had no claim upon the kindness of his companion ; who might, moreover, fear by serving him to displease a valuable client. Thus, feeling that the silence became every moment more oppressive, Octavius rose to take his leave ; and he had no sooner done so than the lawyer started abruptly from his reverie.

“ And do you not, before we separate, ask me to attempt to heal this mighty breach between you and your uncle, Mr. Lyle ? ” he asked with a meaning smile ; “ though I have refused one request, I may be quite ready to grant another, especially when I have every hope of success.”

“ I thank you, Mr. Brunton ; ” said Octavius, with a gleam of his old haughtiness ; “ your offer is made in kindness ; of that I am convinced ; but I am weary of

playing the ungracious part of a poor relation."

"And what if I assured you that my client has never applied such an epithet to you since he first ascertained your existence—what then, young Sir?"

"Then," was the reply; "I should regret to find that there is even less truthfulness in the world than I had believed."

"Do you authorise me to plead your cause?"

"With whom?"

"With Mr. Lyle."

"*My* cause!" exclaimed the young man—"my cause with Mr. Lyle! No, Sir; certainly not; I have no cause to plead. I am no criminal to be put upon my trial. I ask nothing of Mr. Lyle. I desire nothing. It was to prove this that I have subjected myself to mortification and repulse

in the struggle to secure my own independence. I have failed, it is true, but I have nevertheless retained the right to assert myself. Forgive me, Mr. Brunton ;” he added more calmly ; “and do not despise me for this burst of passion. I will endeavour to learn more self-control in future. Once more, good morning ; I have sufficiently taxed your courtesy, and will now take my leave.”

“One word more ;” said the lawyer, as he stepped forward, and grasped his hand. “Hot-headed as you are, I still feel an interest in you. You *shall* not emigrate—mark me, you *shall* not.”

“Then I must starve.”

“Pshaw ! I tell you, Sir, that you shall stay quietly where you are. You *must* do so, if you are really a man of honour. What right have you to win the heart of an

innocent girl, and then break it by your desertion ?”

“ Mr. Brunton, explain yourself.”

“ I will. Alice Ravensdale loves you. Do you understand me now? I am interested in her happiness, and you shall not destroy it. Try for a time what you can do here, and I will also have my eyes about me. Remember, I rely upon your obedience, for I enforce my authority in *her* name. And now, go, go ; you have cost me a good hour’s labour, and I must retrieve the lost time.”

CHAPTER IV.

A BANQUET.

EVENING was rapidly closing in ; a raw, chill, ungenial evening ; the wind roared hoarsely in the chimneys, and moaned through the leafless branches of the trees, while light flakes of snow were whirling and dancing in the dense atmosphere, making the surrounding objects appear doubly dark and dingy ; the pavements were dank and clammy, the lamps burned dimly, and the few foot passengers, who

were abroad, hurried onward with their mouths buried under worsted comforters, or amid the folds of their large cloaks—street-cabs rattled and plunged over crossings, and round corners, as if exulting in the consciousness that benighted poverty alone could in such an evening dispense with their services; the gin-palaces were full of guests, who sought there the warmth and light which they could not find in the dim alleys and squalid courts which they called their homes; and the mighty city looked grim and murky, as though it sought to anticipate the deeper darkness, which night was ere long to shed over its mysteries.

It was, in short, one of those cheerless, wretched evenings which enhance by contrast the home-comforts and home-luxuries of the opulent.

The drawing-room of Mrs. Percival Lyle was resplendent. The clear sharp light of the gas flooded the apartment from the cut-glass globes of the elaborate chandeliers, and the summits of the *étagères*; the hangings of sea-green damask were drawn closely across the windows; Books of Beauty, Albums, French toys, and vases of flowers, littered the tables; chairs and couches of all shapes and sizes, released from their chintz coverings, were mirrored in their holiday splendour in the large pier glasses; porcelain and or-molu, buhl and marqueterie, loaded the consoles, and decorated the delicately-carved marble mantel-pieces; all the gaud and glitter of ostentatious wealth flashed upon the eye in that "admired disorder" so common where gold has been made to do the work of taste; and in the midst of this wilderness of display stood

the master of the house, gazing as earnestly and as lingeringly about him, as though he were contemplating it for the first time.

The expression of his countenance did not, however, betoken any very extraordinary sense of enjoyment ; there was no exultation in his cold keen eye ; no smile of gratulation playing about his compressed lips ; no elasticity in the movement of his limbs as he slowly paced the floor. It was evident at a glance that his reflections were by no means so bright as the scene in which they were indulged ; that they had wandered from the square to the counting-house, or to Demerara, or to "the other little affair" which was likely to paralyze his commercial operations ; or, it might even be, to the jeopardized loan of one of that night's guests ; for although the astute

merchant had affected to deprecate the idea of a marriage between Mr. Forester and his eldest daughter, the hint of his wife upon the subject had recurred to him more than once. It might, indeed, be the best, if not the *only* means of liquidating a formidable debt. It must be thought of at all events, and thought of seriously, for matters were looking very threatening in the city ; and there was no telling when the crash might come.

That the elder Lyle would be brought to join in any new commercial speculation, Mr. Percival had long ceased to hope ; and indeed, on mature consideration, it did not appear to be desirable that he *should* do so ; for Reginald Lyle was by no means likely to prove so confiding as Sydney Forester ; and before he incurred any pecuniary risk, would be sure to satisfy

himself on a thousand points whereon explanation must prove difficult, if not dangerous.

No ; *his* hoards must come into the strongbox of his nephew by deed of gift, or in the more distant shape of a bequest ; he must know no more of the affairs of the " Firm " than he already did. Everything depended upon prudence—and time ; but while Mr. Percival Lyle felt that he could answer for the prudence, he was fearfully aware that the question of time was beyond his control.

This was the conviction which clouded the brow, and compressed the lips of the merchant, as he gazed round his wealth-laden rooms ; he was powerless, and must trust to fate. Young Forester's loan had given him breathing time ; and some other equally-fortunate freak of fortune *might* save

him yet. In any and every case, it would be well and wise to marry his daughters as soon as the opportunity should present itself. He would be very civil to Forester ; Anastasia was a fine girl, and with a little management the match might be brought about. Nothing could be better than this dinner ; the girls would be looking their best ; so would their mother ; so would the house ; and first impressions are always important. And then the nabob-uncle, and the sumptuous entertainment. Mr. Percival Lyle did not pause for an instant to calculate its cost ; he looked further, and only computed its possible consequences.

A thundering rap had announced the arrival of the earliest guest, ere Mrs. Percival and her daughters made their appearance in the drawing-room. The young ladies had

been detained until the last moment by their governess, in order that every curl of their hair, and every fold of their dress, might be in its place; but who shall venture to decide upon what had delayed the advent of the mother? Who shall attempt to enumerate the labours and the anxieties of the mistress of a house, where a dinner is to be given with the greatest possible display, at the smallest possible cost?

Assuredly these luxurious banquets, where costly viands and gastronomical fancies are framed in by the glitter of silver plate and cut crystal, are pleasant things enough for the guests, who are merely required to take their seats, to supply their quota of conversation, to eat, to drink, and to applaud; but little does the professional diner-out, who quietly persuades himself that his "quips and cranks," his light jests, and

genial wit, amply compensate for the hospitality of his hosts, picture to himself the amount of toil and care which the good things of which he so calmly partakes, have involved upon the lady of the mansion.

Even the Amphytryon himself, when he has overcome the minor miseries of an invaded dressing-room, an ill-brushed hat, and unpolished boots, while he forgets the outlay of the feast, is independent of all its other drawbacks; but the unfortunate hostess is overwhelmed by the importance and the fatigues of her complicated duties throughout the whole of the preceding morning; and even after she is ceremoniously conducted to the head of her own table, her mind is still harassed by the dread of cold soups, cracked turbot, awkward waiters, disfigured *entrées*, collapsed *soufflets*, and all the other evils attendant

upon an unaccustomed straining after effect.

The "half-hour before dinner" is, however, perhaps, the most trying period of the day. She must smile, and look at ease, and bandy civilities with her visitors, while she is taxing her memory to assure herself that nothing has been forgotten; and is keenly conscious that every short-coming will be visited in wrath upon her unhappy self by her irate and mortified husband. Yes; smile as she will, she must remain, until the dessert is placed upon the table, a mere domestic Atlas; and although her shoulders may be draped in satin, and veiled with lace, still they must bear the burden that has been laid upon them. However, this is pleasure in one of its many phases; and where is the would-be fashionist who ever shrinks before the perils of such an undertaking?

“Fortunately, I am just in time;” was the exclamation of Mrs. Percival Lyle, as she hurried to her chair, busily engaged in endeavouring to draw on a glove half a size too small for the hand which it was intended to cover; “but I declare that I am worn to death. Servants are so stupid! And that *odious* chandelier! Anastasia, *do* hold yourself upright; I declare I shall expect to see one of your shoulders growing out, if you persist in stooping in that way. Caroline, sit down, and pray do not look as if you had only just come into the room. Take up a book, or place some open music on the piano. Nothing is so *mauvais ton* as to be taken by surprise when you receive company at home. I am surprised that Miss —— that your governess—has not impressed that fact more fully upon you; but that she has seen fit to leave that

responsibility to me—although she is well paid for doing her own duties—I consider it indispensable to make you fully comprehend that it is most essential to all persons of fashion and position—Ha! I thought so. I hear the lumbering tread of Mr. Lancaster on the stairs. He is always afraid of being too late.”

And Mr. Lancaster was announced.

“Good day, cousin—your servant, Mrs. Percival—how are you, young ladies?” he grumbled, as he shook hands with his host; “rather pleasanter here than outside, I can tell you. It’s a night to make a man hug his own fire-side, and cling to his dressing-gown and slippers. Anything going on in the city, Cousin Lyle?”

“Nothing particular; all is flat enough just now. And what are *you* doing?”

“Not much in an official way, but a little

in my own—a little in our common interest, I ought rather to say. I believe that I have induced Octavius to follow my advice."

"Ah, that is a good hearing ; for, between ourselves, he is sadly in the way here. Of course, if he were likely to get on, there would not be a word to say : the world is wide enough ; but a man has plenty to do now-a-days (especially when he is married, and has an expensive family) to provide for his own necessities, without being called upon to sacrifice his interests to those of a lad without incumbrances, who can care little whether he makes a home here, or at the other side of the globe. When does he embark ?"

"That is more than I can tell you ; but once let him pledge himself, and the rest will be easy."

"Then he is not pledged?"

"Not precisely, but he has no other alternative now. His last scheme has failed; and go he must."

"It may be the making of him—" said Mr. Percival blandly.

"No doubt. He will have the world before him, and it will be his own fault if he does not make a fortune, as his uncle did. I intend to extort a promise from him this evening;" said the cold, dry, pitiless official, who, as he stood before the fire extending his lean hands towards the blaze, looked rather like a human fungus than a man endowed with a heart and the capabilities of human sympathy and feeling.

"You will have no opportunity of doing so; at least, none under my roof."

"What! does he not dine here?"

"No."

"How is that?"

"I have my own reasons."

"Of course, of course; and no doubt they are good and sufficient ones. Then this is not, as I supposed, another family gathering?"

"With the exception of Octavius, such is precisely the nature of the party; and I have provided a substitute even for him. A fine young man, a very fine young man; for whom I have a great regard, a very great regard. You will remember this, Mrs. Percival, and I depend upon your doing all in your power to make my house agreeable to Mr. Forester."

"Certainly, my love; it is my duty to do so to all your friends. Anastasia, dearest, take your guitar out of the case. We shall have some music; and remove the case into the back drawing-room out of the way. Do

you think the dear girls are grown, Mr. Lancaster?"

"Since I met them in Hertford Street, do you mean, Mrs. Percival? Really, I can't say that I perceive it."

"Oh! true;" simpered the hostess; "I had quite forgotten that you had seen them so lately; but upon my honour Anastasia is becoming so womanly in her appearance, that she must make me look quite old."

"We are all growing old;" growled the guest; "we have had our day, and now we must be satisfied to let these young things have theirs. If you looked for a compliment, cousin, you could not have addressed yourself to a worse person than Joseph Lancaster. I have had too many serious affairs to attend to all my life to have found time for the polite falsehoods, with which the fine gentlemen of the present

day so agreeably tickle the ears of the ladies. Of course you are growing old like the rest of us ; but you have at least the satisfaction of knowing that we are all travelling the same road."

The lip of Mrs. Percival quivered ; the weight of a bitter retort was visibly upon it ; but one glance from her husband sufficed to silence her.

Gradually the guests assembled ; and, with the exception of the stranger, Mr. Lyle was the last to join the party ; although the warmth of the welcome with which he was greeted on all sides might well have sufficed to hasten his advent. There were so many anxious hopes that he would not suffer from the rawness of the evening ; so many regrets (all connected with his individual comfort) that the weather should have proved so unpropitious ; and so many entreaties that he

would occupy one particular chair, where he would be protected from the draught on the opening of the door, that it was perfectly delightful to contemplate the interest which he had created in the breasts of his attentive and anxious relatives. His replies were, however, brief, and somewhat ungracious ; and he had no sooner taken his seat than he glanced keenly and rapidly about him, as if in search of some missing object, but he made no remark, and was soon engaged in conversation with his host and Mr. Brunton.

Suddenly, however, his humour changed. He turned abruptly from the lawyer, and addressed himself with great animation to Mrs. Percival (who was audibly lamenting to Miss Pen, for want of a more congenial listener, that "dear Mr. Lyle" should be exposed to so wretched a climate) declaring,

in his turn, that no one had a right to complain, or, in fact, any room for complaint, in a country which within a week offered every climate under the sun; or rather, as he laughingly corrected his own phrase, under the sky.

"Why, Madam," he said gaily, "during the last three days we have had rain, sleet, and fog, an apocryphal peal of thunder, a hail-storm, and a glimpse of sunshine. Everything for everybody; and a free choice for all. I assure you that I am in no mood to find fault with the monotony of the weather."

Then, still in the same strain of forced and laboured high spirits, he complimented her upon her house, her daughters, and her attire; and succeeded in convincing her that he could be (when he pleased) a most charming companion. Subsequently, he had a flattering remark for the young

ladies themselves—two fine, showy, highly-dressed girls, with bright eyes and abundant ringlets—which brought a bright and very becoming blush to their cheeks ; a short but kind greeting for Miss Penelope ; and, finally, a courteous and almost deferential inquiry as to the health of Mrs. Stainton and her stiffly-cravated sons.

At length Mr. Forester was announced, and presented in due form to the whole circle, and with peculiar emphasis to Mrs. Percival Lyle ; who, accustomed to the prominent weakness of her husband—a weakness, by the way, far from peculiar in his case—of never permitting himself to appear influenced by his wife, at once perceived that her hint had not been lost ; and she accordingly called up her blandest smiles to second his designs upon their handsome creditor.

Worthy Miss Pen, apparently with a

fore-knowledge that she would be a far less prominent personage on this occasion than she had been in Hertford Street, had excelled herself in the dignity of her costume, in order to counteract the anticipated humiliation. Her turban was taller and more voluminous than ever, her satin dress more stiff and stately, and her point lace more profuse in quantity; while Mrs. Stainton, with an affectation intended to mortify the vanity of her hostess, had carefully abstained from every approach to splendour; and in her plain, closely-fitting robe of silver grey, without a single ornament, looked as though, like Cornelia, she would have pointed to her sons as the only jewels that she valued; while her calm, haughty, self-centred deportment formed as striking a contrast with the fussy unrest of Mrs. Percival, as her quaker-like

attire presented to the elaborate costume of the three ladies of the house.

“ And now, my love ;” said Mr. Percival, after a rapid glance round the room, and with a studied courtesy which would not have ill become a noble of the *ancien régime* ; “ as our party is complete, you will perhaps allow me to order dinner.”

“ If you please.”

“ But Octavius—” exclaimed Miss Pen in evident disappointment.

“ Ay, true ;” said Mr. Lyle inquiringly ; “ where is Mr. Octavius ? I had looked to find all my new relatives once more assembled, and I perceive that he is not present. Is he so much engaged in making preparations for his voyage as to have declined your invitation, nephew ?”

“ I did not ask the pleasure of his com-

pany, Mr. Lyle. I could not permit myself to do so."

"Indeed! and may I inquire your reason?"

"Certainly; and my answer will be a sufficiently categorical one. I could not admit a person to my table, when I was honoured with your society, by whom you had been insulted."

"Excellent! excellent!" muttered Mr. Lancaster to himself, while he rubbed his hands with intense satisfaction, as though he had personally achieved some signal triumph; "Percival is not to be caught napping. Shrewd fellow! very shrewd fellow! The shot tells both ways."

And he laughed; for even Joseph Lancaster *could* laugh; although the peculiar manifestations of his mirth were not such as

to gladden a warm heart, or to refresh a generous spirit.

“I? Insulted?” exclaimed the Anglo-Mexican disdainfully; “Pshaw! nephew, you rave. Old Reginald Lyle insulted by a stripling! The thing is too absurd. The individual does not exist who could insult *me* with impunity. I am a quiet man by nature, but the coldest blood sometimes boils the quickest. Insult is an evil which I have never apprehended, and never undergone; and no pulse of mine has been stirred throughout a long life by the anticipation. Woe betide him who teaches me that such a thing might be possible! Meanwhile, I wage no war with boys; and should have been glad to see the lad once more, before he cast himself adrift on the world.”

"Had I known that—" commenced the merchant apologetically.

"Not a word—not a word—the matter is scarcely worth discussion ; and perhaps it is better as it is, for your sumptuous rooms and splendid fare would be but a poor preparation for the close fare and meagre diet of an emigrant ship. But now I think of it, I cannot help wondering who put this emigration fancy into the boy's head. There is a spirit of enterprise about the thing which I confess pleases me ; yet still it seems singular that a young man, who must have *some* personal interests in his own country, should decide on expatriating himself. Who could have advised him to take such a step ?"

"I did," said the government official, somewhat ill at ease.

"Ha, indeed ! So it was you, Mr. Lancaster, was it ? Well, now I confess that I

am more astonished than ever ; for I should have imagined that with your sedentary habits, and thorough appreciation of the comforts of life, the very idea of months passed on shipboard, and the tough mutton and dampers of the gold regions, would have been odious to you. May I ask what could have impelled you to urge such a measure upon him ?”

“ I thought that the lad would be better anywhere than here, and I think so still. He has been struggling and striving for years, and he is still as far from succeeding in life as when he started. I acted conscientiously ; and I did more than advise, for I promised to give him a hundred pounds on the day of embarkation, in order to start him fair.”

“ A hundred pounds, did you say ?”

“ Yes, Mr. Lyle, a hundred pounds ;” was

the indignant retort of his interlocutor, who fancied that he detected an expression of contempt on the countenance of the nabob ; “and although such a sum may appear insignificant to an individual of your colossal fortune, I can assure you—”

“My *dear* Sir—” exclaimed the old merchant deprecatingly ; “you quite mistake me. I consider your conduct to have been most admirable. A hundred pounds ! there is the making of a man in such a sum, if he only knows how to turn it to proper account. You do me injustice, if you imagine that I underrate your generosity ; quite the contrary. There are, as I am well aware, so few men in the present day who would be willing to give away a hundred pounds, unless they were quite convinced that they were, in some way or another, benefiting themselves as well as their friend.”

"How could it benefit me?" asked the government official, glancing at the same time towards his host. "It is very improbable that, if the boy goes to Australia, I shall ever see him again."

"Very improbable, as you say;" replied Mr. Lyle drily; "and it is certain that many adventurers have left their native country with a tithe of the sum which you so disinterestedly offered to bestow on our young relative."

"I did more;" pursued Lancaster, convinced that he had impressed upon his wealthy kinsman a very high idea of his liberality, and anxious to follow up his advantage; "for I induced Miss Pen to promise a second hundred."

"Penelope too!" muttered the Anglo-Mexican in a tone of annoyance.

"And, moreover," continued the clerk,

heedless of the interruption ; “ our good host has pledged himself to defray all the expenses of the boy’s passage, so that he will land at Melbourne a free man ; a free man, Sir ; and how few of those, who leave their own country in pursuit of fortune, can say as much.”

“ Upon my honour !” exclaimed the old gentleman earnestly ; “ I am at a loss for words to express what I feel. How grateful the young fellow ought to be for the generous interest evinced towards him by his family.”

“ The respect due to the name of Lyle demanded some exertion on our part,” said Mr. Percival pompously.

“ You are right, nephew, quite right ;” replied his kinsman with a trembling lip ; “ it requires constant and conscientious exertion. It may be comparatively obscure, but it has hitherto been unblemished ; and

Heaven grant that it may continue so for centuries after I am in my grave! A long-descended name is a noble inheritance, when no stain has fallen upon it. It is only when it has been sullied by dishonour that it becomes a reproach. But dinner is announced. Mrs. Percival, will you honour me with your arm, while my friend Brunton offers his to my sister Pen? We shall, I believe, be all well pleased with this arrangement."

"It is an admirable one, Mr. Lyle;" said the host; "Anastasia, my dear, Mr. Forster will be good enough to take charge of *you*."

And leaving the rest of the party to marshal themselves as they saw fit, the pompous merchant made his bow to Mrs. Stainton with a condescending courtesy, which must have overwhelmed a lady of

less self-appreciation than the principal of Minerva Lodge. •

The dinner was luxurious and laborious ; the table groaned, and the heated attendants, too numerous for the size of the apartment, jostled each other in their anxiety to be everywhere at once, and to do everything for everybody at the same time. Poor Mrs. Percival counted the dishes as they were set down ; and occasionally glanced anxiously at her husband's eyebrows to ascertain if matters were progressing to his satisfaction. She watched the removal of the covers in nervous trepidation ; and meanwhile she maintained, by an effort that was almost heroic, a disjointed conversation with Mr. Lyle ; and overlooked with true maternal solicitude, the proceedings of her eldest daughter and Sydney Forester.

How much depended upon the success of

that important dinner! A fortune to be gained for her family, and a husband to be secured for Anastasia! And all went off admirably; the soups were warm, the turbot entire, and the whole aspect of the table satisfactory. The guests ate with good appetite; the conversation never flagged; the young heir was apparently captivated by the brilliant graces of the accomplished Miss Lyle; Mr. Percival, who had a double point to carry, was even more magnificent than his wont, and talked of thousands and tens of thousands "as maids of fifteen prate of puppy dogs;" the two odious Staintons were utterly eclipsed by the fashionable Mr. Forester; the Anglo-Mexican had praised the hock; Mrs. Stainton in her grey gown, and Miss Pen in her vacillating turban, were admirable foils for herself and her daughters; and Mrs. Percival, as she followed her lady-

guests to the drawing-room, was radiant with happiness. The golden rhapsodies of her clever husband had invigorated her both in mind and body; she seemed to grasp the treasures upon which he had dilated; and she almost began to regret that they had not given twice as sumptuous a dinner to twice as many guests, in order that she might have doubled her triumph.

Nor was Mr. Percival Lyle less satisfied than herself. His wealthy uncle not only listened with undisguised interest to his somewhat hazardous statements and inferences, but, after the disappearance of the ladies, urged him to pursue the subject of his commercial prosperity with a pertinacity and earnestness that encouraged him to still further exertion; and, finally, grasped his hand with a warmth and evident self-gratulation that spoke volumes.

Sydney Forester had apparently exhausted himself in his attempt to captivate Anastasia, and, after her departure, had quietly subsided into a listener ; while the young Staintons, when they had respectively replied to the smiling inquiries of their nabob-uncle for Lady Harriet and the Bishop, imitated the example of their young companion, and sipped their wine, and ate their preserved ginger, in silence. Even Mr. Brunton was unusually taciturn. He was annoyed at the absence of Octavius, and still more so at the intelligence volunteered by Miss Pen, that the poor boy had positively decided on leaving England.

“What, indeed, can he do, my good Sir?” had asked the worthy spinster ; “you know how he is situated ; everything seems to go wrong with him, though I am sure I cannot tell why it should be so ; he has no

prospect of getting on ; his talents—and he really *has* talents—do not seem to help him in the least—and he can't stay at home to starve."

"He is making a fool of himself, Madam ;" was the uncourteous reply.

"I confess that I do not see it in that light ;" said Miss Pen deprecatingly ; "though I am sure that no one will regret him so much as I shall. He has been so terribly tried, poor boy, that I am sometimes surprised to think how well he bears up against all his reverses. So willing as he is to do everything for the best, and to find that nothing is to be done, I pity him with all my heart ; and if I could only contrive to support him—"

"Let him alone, and take care of yourself ;" interposed the lawyer abruptly ; "he never *has* starved, and depend on it, he

never *will* starve. Such an apprehension is outrageous. However, *you* are decidedly not called upon to make any sacrifice ; he has relations much better able to assist him than you are."

" But if they refuse to do so ?"

" They can't refuse when he is absolutely destitute, supposing the thing to be possible. Their own pride must prevent it. You are attached to him, I know ; and you cannot more efficiently prove that attachment than by discouraging this wild whim that old Lancaster has put into his head. Emigrate, indeed ! A young fellow like him ! It would be all very well if he had only his hands to depend upon ; but the boy has energy and intellect, and it is his duty to use both in a fitting manner."

" It is very hard upon him that he cannot obtain some employment worthy of his talents

and education;" sighed poor kind-hearted Miss Pen.

"I will tell you what is still more hard upon him, my dear lady;" replied Mr. Brunton; "and that is, that he should be urged by his own relatives to run the risk of being burnt in an emigrant ship, or murdered at the diggings. That is his most legitimate cause of complaint. Why, if he were the veriest outcast of society he could not come to a more desperate resolution. A pretty companion he would make for the escaped convicts of Van Dieman's Land and the runaway crews of the trading vessels! Moreover, indifferent as he may appear on the subject, I am convinced that his uncle will never allow anything so monstrous to be carried out, as this notable project of Mr. Lancaster's."

"Ah ! if one could only hope *that* ;" said Miss Penelope.

"And why should you not ? My client is wary, and has not yet declared his intentions towards any of the family."

"Perhaps so ;" said the spinster with a sigh ; "but it is easy to see how much he is taken with Mr. Percival."

"Why yes ; it is, as you justly remark, quite evident that Mr. Lyle greatly enjoys his conversation ;" replied the lawyer, with a quiet smile just flickering upon his upper lip. "Your nephew is fluent and emphatic, and undeniably entertaining ; but still the pleasure which our friend finds in listening to his discourse, does not necessarily involve injustice to his other connections. Remember that your brother has a great deal in his power."

"I know it ; I know it, my good Sir ; and often do I wish that I dared open my heart freely to him, and tell him all I feel for the poor boy who has never yet found a helping hand in all his difficulties ; but, situated as I am with Mr. Lyle, the thing is impossible ; or I really do believe that he might be induced to befriend the orphan son of his dead brother. And then, Octavius has offended him. Poor boy ! how could he be so rash !"

"That was unlucky, certainly. However, from what he said this evening, it is certain that the old gentleman does not harbour any resentment against the lad, so that even that mischief may be repaired."

"How glad I am that you think so. I feel so sure that Octavius would be an honour to the family if he only had fair play which—between ourselves, Mr. Brunton—has

never been the case, that I could have found it in my heart to be quite angry with Mr. Lyle, for taking offence where none was intended. However, you must know best; and I only hope that you may prove a true prophet. But see, Mrs. Percival is rising from the table."

And Miss Pen, having collected the ample folds of her stiff brocade about her, accompanied her hostess to the drawing-room.

Once or twice, as he sat listening to the inflated and extravagant boastings of his host, an expression of intense disgust passed over the intelligent countenance of the lawyer; but no such symptom of distaste could be detected on the features of Reginald Lyle, and Mr. Percival was accordingly triumphant. He had never seen his kinsman in so bright a mood before; and forgetting, in his self-gratulation, the refined luxuries of Hertford

Street, he suffered himself to believe that the Nabob was dazzled by his own splendour. The hallucination was an unlucky one, as it tended to overrule the discretion of the not very sapient merchant, who immediately resolved to deepen the impression which his wealthy relative had so obviously received; and accordingly digressed from his own prosperity, into regrets that his respected kinsman and guest should have wasted the best years of his life in a distant exile.

“There is so much to be done in this country;” he said with a benignant smile: “all that is needed are perseverance, a certain capital, and—judgment. Of course some talent is required, or commerce would be a less honourable and honoured a pursuit than, I am proud to say, it is. I will not quote my own success, for I am afraid that

I must plead guilty to a tinge of superstition, and acknowledge that I have often had occasion to suspect that I was born under a lucky planet. I hear men talk of disappointments, and unfortunate speculations, and frustrated hopes ; men, too, who wear a fair face with the world, and who appear to be surrounded by affluence ; but I am thankful to say, that, even while I sympathize with them, I do so ignorantly, as these are trials which I have never been called upon to undergo."

"The judgment and talent to which you just now alluded, have, no doubt, spared you such reverses," remarked the elder Lyle.

"I am not vain enough to think so, my good Sir ;" said the host, glancing furtively at Forester ; "but of thus much I am certain, that all prospers with me ; and, in so far as

I can see, is likely to do so ; for I always act upon one settled principle, from which I never swerve."

"And the upright merchant has but that one," responded the Anglo-Mexican with deep feeling ; "honesty, probity, and honour are his watchwords ; and woe betide him by whom they are either disregarded or denied. But we are becoming serious, when we have only cause for mirth ; nevertheless, one word more before we change our subject. I know, my worthy namesake and kinsman ;" he continued emphatically, "I well know, by experience, that men of business seldom care to be so communicative, even to their nearest relatives, as you have been to-night ; and thus I deeply feel the compliment that you have paid to *me*. Of course I could not but be perfectly convinced, while partaking of your splendid hospitality (knowing

you to be an upright and honourable man), that your worldly position must be a brilliant and a secure one ; but still I must be permitted to confess that I was by no means prepared for the details, with which you have so frankly favoured me. I am very glad to see that these young gentlemen have been so attentive to your discourse, for they must have learnt a great and a valuable lesson to-day. Nothing can be more profitable to youth than the example of those who have achieved fortune with a clear conscience and an upright heart ; those who can, as they contemplate the success due to their own exertions, look their fellow-men boldly in the face, and defy fate or malice itself to rob them of their good name. And now, do you not think that we had better join the ladies ? although it is true that one's resolution is severely taxed by leaving your fine Madeira. Famous wine, Sir, that

Madeira, and well worthy of a place even upon your hospitable and sumptuous board ; but we must not, nevertheless, forget our gallantry ; and when we remember the inducements up-stairs, we may even make up our minds to abandon your incomparable Madeira !” .

“ It is good, very good ;” said Mr. Lancaster, refilling his glass ; “ something new, ey, cousin ? I don’t remember ever to have tasted it before ; but it is never too late to do well. This Madeira is a hit. I think it is even better than what I once drank at my Lord—”

“ Then you really approve the wine, Mr. Lyle ?” asked the host, with a bland smile, heedless of the oration of the government official.

“ Approve it !” echoed the old gentleman ;

"I consider it, as I have just said, to be incomparable."

"In that case, my dear Sir;" said Mr. Percival, deferentially; "may I hope that you will allow me the privilege of presenting you with a few dozens? You may do so without compunction, as I have an enormous stock in my cellar."

"You are really too good, but the offer is irresistible;" was the ready reply; "and as I feel that to a man in your circumstances, such a gift, splendid as it is, can be of no importance, I shall accept it with pleasure."

The host bowed his thanks; all the party rose; and as he slowly ascended the stairs, Mr. Percival Lyle, somewhat calmed by a concession which he had by no means anticipated, amused his momentary leisure by marvelling if he really were possessed of the

requisite quantity of the incomparable Madeira necessary to the fulfilment of his offer. Poor man ! clever as he was, he had been fairly caught in his own trap. He had never intended to furnish his own bait.

“ A stingy old curmudgeon ! ” he murmured to himself, as he crossed the threshold of the drawing-room ; “ as though there were not good wine enough to be had for money in London. How could I be such an ass ? But, on the other hand, who could have imagined for an instant that he would have so unhesitatingly laid himself under such an obligation. However, it may be a lucky hit after all ; and, in any case, the thing is done ; and I must make the best of it.”

The evening passed off brilliantly. Miss Stapleton presided at the tea-table, and ac-

accompanied Miss Caroline at the piano ; tuned the guitar for Miss Lyle ; sorted the music ; and obeyed the various biddings of the lady of the mansion with anxious alacrity. Anastasia was in excellent voice, and her attitude while singing was irreproachable ; the well-trained and indefatigable governess covered her occasional lapses in the elaborate duet which they executed together, in the most admirable manner ; and eventually it was discovered that Mr. Forester was also a musician, when Miss Stapleton's good offices were once more put into requisition at the instrument, while Miss Lyle and her presumed admirer turned over innumerable music-books, and sang song after song together, in a style which elicited the most enthusiastic encomiums of their auditors.

“Is it really possible !” exclaimed old Mr. Lyle, at the termination of a bravura which had awakened all the echoes of the spacious rooms ; “I declare it wants but a few minutes to midnight. Ladies, ladies, you are teaching me dissipation in my old age, and will ruin the reputation of my friend the lawyer here. I must make my escape at once. Nephew, you will not forget the Madeira, for I assure you that *I* shall not. I have experienced but one disappointment to-night. I should have liked to meet *all* my kinsfolk once more. However, I shall not lose sight of the motive which excluded one of them from the party—and so, good night. I am sorry that I cannot set you home, Mr. Lancaster ; for brief as our acquaintance has been, circumstances have accidentally come to my knowledge which

have given me a high opinion of your foresight and prudence. I have, indeed, every reason to be proud of both my nephews—and I am so—I am very much so—I take pleasure in avowing it. How little did I anticipate a few months ago that I should so soon become a member of so charming a family circle! But I must not linger longer; I feel that I am unreasonable.”

And, having bowed himself to the door of the apartment, Mr. Reginald Lyle disappeared.

An hour afterwards the gas was turned off in No.—, Bedford Square; lights appeared at the chamber windows; there was a rush of feet, and a clamour of voices in the area as the hired waiters took their departure; bolts were drawn, keys turned, and bells

affixed to the shutters; the church clock pealed out the hour of one; the nerves of Mrs. Percival relapsed into tranquillity, and the heat and hurry of the day were over.

CHAPTER V.

WHICH HEMISPHERE?

“WORDS! mere words!” murmured Octavius Lyle to himself, as he paced to and fro the narrow room which by courtesy was called his own, in the humble abode of Trevor. “He said that I must not emigrate—that I *should* not—and he evoked the vision of Alice; but he never suggested the means by which my exile might be avoided; and the worldly lawyer—the man of deeds and parchments—dared me to—

hat? to break her heart; as though her affection would not be more sorely tried by seeing me exist in poverty and humiliation here, in my own land, an alien from my aughty relatives, and an outcast from all hope in my home."

He paused. Alas! poor boy, he remembered that he had no home; that he was simply one of the waifs and strays (and how many there are of them!) on the pavement of stony-hearted London. A sob rose to his throat, but he conquered it, and resumed his weary walk.

"She is very young, and who knows?—She *may* refuse to abandon me; and I *may*, in that new and strange world, triumph over fortune. I have youth and strength, thews and sinews; and such is the capital required to compel fortune by labour. Were I but sure that in a few years, by spending these

ungrudgingly, I would return laden with wealth to claim her, I should cease to repine ; but years—years—who can calculate upon their effects on the human heart? She is beautiful and an heiress. In the world she will be surrounded by adulation, the object of many a suitor's vows ; and what am I, that she should waste the brightest period of her life in vain regret, uncertainty, and suspense?"

Once more he stood motionless in the centre of the apartment. He dared not answer that question even to his own heart ; an expression of intense despair settled upon his brow ; and his arms, which were folded across his breast, became rigid as iron.

"Why should I hope?—how can I?" he pursued, after the silence of a moment, which to him had seemed an age of agony ; "my letter is still unanswered.

Alice is timid; her firmness has perhaps been shaken; and she has been taught to feel ashamed of her penniless suitor. Well, well; the shipwrecked mariner is too often compelled to relax his hold of the last plank that bore him up—let me drown like the rest. It is dying ten thousand deaths to exist as I am doing now. I am not bound to obey the bidding of Mr. Brunton. I owe him no submission, no gratitude. Alice, however, shall decide my fate. I can yet spare a week to indecision; and if, at the close of that week, I hear nothing from *her*, I will subdue my pride, and accept for a season the alms of Mr. Lancaster, and the help of poor Aunt Pen. But both debts shall be cancelled, and that speedily, if I live. This good right arm”—and he stretched it to its utmost length as he spoke; “and this right hand”—and he

smiled bitterly as he clenched his fingers with a force which left them white as marble from the pressure; "these at least may serve me well. I will forget my dainty birth, and my ill-judged training; I will forget that I was bred a gentleman, to earn my daily bread as a common hind;—these at least I can control, and with a blessing upon *them*, I will repay the debt, and walk erect under the canopy of Heaven as a free man. Little will suffice then, for life will be a mere game to be played out briefly and boldly, without retrospection and without hope—a life of perpetual to-days, without a yesterday or a morrow worthy of a single pang, or a single anxiety."

At this moment a stroke upon the door of his apartment broke in on the solitary rhapsody of the excited young man; and, in the next, a letter was put into his

hands by the little handmaid of Mrs. Trevor.

A letter ! Octavius controlled himself, and thanked her as he took possession of it ; nor did he venture to glance even at the superscription, until she had again closed the door behind her ; but so soon as she had disappeared, his eyes fastened upon it with an eagerness, which brought the blood rushing in a flood of liquid fire to his brow, and made every nerve in his manly frame quiver with emotion.

It was but a fold of paper ; but therein lay his fate.

If Octavius had felt within himself, while writing to his beloved, all the energy of a young and sanguine nature, and could not realize the idea of suffering or sorrow to Alice when once she should be his own. Alice, on her side, was as little able to

comprehend why the poverty of her lover should be any bar to their union, while she herself possessed the wherewithal to secure their comfort and well-being; and she consequently put away with scornful carelessness all anxiety for the future—that future which ever appears so remote and so unimportant to the young. The present sufficed to her—her love for Octavius filled it with joy to overflowing—and she cared for nothing beyond this. It was therefore, as a natural consequence, in the most resolute spirit of self-abnegation that Miss Ravensdale at length wrote to refuse the moral emancipation so reluctantly tendered by her suitor.

“It really surprises me that you should talk such nonsense, my dear Octavius;” said the letter; “I never expected to meet with anything so silly and sentimental except in a novel; and if I did not understand you

so well as I am sure I do, I should fancy that you wanted to be rid of your poor Alice. Of this, however, I acquit you for this once, but beware for the future. Perhaps, indeed, I might have been angry even on this occasion, and given way to what would, after all, have been a very pardonable suspicion; but when I looked back upon the past, I could not believe that you could have so egregiously deceived both me and yourself. Your fears, I confess, are mere riddles to me, not worthy the guessing. There are a few clouds in our sky just at present, it is true—but what of that? Have you forgotten that our favourite Moore (who certainly must have known a great deal more of the world than either you or I) said or sung, with a philosophy which you would do well to imitate, that

accompanied Miss Caroline at the piano ; tuned the guitar for Miss Lyle ; sorted the music ; and obeyed the various biddings of the lady of the mansion with anxious alacrity. Anastasia was in excellent voice, and her attitude while singing was irreproachable ; the well-trained and indefatigable governess covered her occasional lapses in the elaborate duet which they executed together, in the most admirable manner ; and eventually it was discovered that Mr. Forester was also a musician, when Miss Stapleton's good offices were once more put into requisition at the instrument, while Miss Lyle and her presumed admirer turned over innumerable music-books, and sang song after song together, in a style which elicited the most enthusiastic encomiums of their auditors.

same kind, still he did not show any anger, and listened to all that I said with a great deal of patience. And so he ought, Octavius ; for your family is as good, and it may be, even better than his own ; so what can he require more ? I shall tell him again, as I have already done, that my happiness depends on my marriage with you, and it will be strange indeed, if he should endeavour to thwart me for the first time in his life. So now promise me that you will not listen to the cold-hearted advice of those who would seek to separate us. We are not ambitious ; and I have made up my mind to be such a prudent, painstaking little wife, that we shall live upon almost nothing at all. Let us wait."

One of the greatest blessings of youth is its firm faith in the future. It is true that there are occasional exceptions to this

have given me a high opinion of your foresight and prudence. I have, indeed, every reason to be proud of both my nephews—and I am so—I am very much so—I take pleasure in avowing it. How little did I anticipate a few months ago that I should so soon become a member of so charming a family circle! But I must not linger longer; I feel that I am unreasonable.”

And, having bowed himself to the door of the apartment, Mr. Reginald Lyle disappeared.

An hour afterwards the gas was turned off in No.—, Bedford Square; lights appeared at the chamber windows; there was a rush of feet, and a clamour of voices in the area as the hired waiters took their departure; bolts were drawn, keys turned, and bells

ixed to the shutters; the church clock
led out the hour of one; the nerves of
s. Percival relapsed into tranquillity, and
heat and hurry of the day were over.

long and dim perspective with an eye of equal faith?

“What is to be done?”

Which of us has not, at some period of our live—aye, even the very happiest and most fortune-favoured among us—asked that mental question, at times so difficult to answer? No wonder, then, that as Octavius sat with the generous letter of his fond and confiding Alice tightly grasped in his hand, it arose spontaneously to his lips. He had made no promise to Mr. Brunton, and he appeared to be cut off from every chance of existence in his own country.

True, it would be torture to put a world's width between himself and the noble-minded girl, who was ready to sacrifice all for his sake; but there was at least some

hope of a brighter future, should he risk the venture. And then he strove to persuade himself that, after all, the misery of such a separation was in a great measure ideal; for were they not sundered even now? He was forbidden to enter the house which was her temporary home; their correspondence was rare and difficult, and beset by a thousand dangers; and meanwhile he was living a life of dependence upon others, unable to liberate himself from the heavy and galling fetters of debt and sufferance.

How narrow is the arena now left vacant in prosperous and over-populated England, for even the most energetic of her sons, when they possess no powerful influence to second them in the great struggle of life. How many are there who could, like Archimedes, move the world, if they were only enabled to apply the lever in the right place;

but alas ! where the saving influence and the potent secret are denied, how few succeed to any other heritage, than the bitter one of blighted energies, and a broken heart !

Long had Octavius felt this disheartening truth ; and, had it not been that his love for Alice, and his confidence in her answering affection, had taught him alike hope and patience, it is possible that he would long since have ceased to wage so unequal a warfare as that to which he had for years seen himself condemned ; but while his day-star still shone on, he seemed to descry a brighter future even amid the clouds and vapours of the murky and sunless present.

Now again that star beamed out, dimmed it might be by tears, but burning steadily and serenely in the heaven of his heart. He could trust her ; she was all his own ; and he must prove himself worthy of the treasure

that he had won. A few years—long, weary years—for he knew already, even before he had entered upon them, that they must be both long and weary; and he might shake off the shackles of poverty, and return to his native land in a position to assert his rank in society, to take his place among his equals, and to claim her plighted hand with confidence and pride.

Could he only see her once more, before he became a wanderer upon the waters, and the denizen of a distant hemisphere; could he only tell her that it was for her sake that he went forth to toil, and strive, and hoard; could he only clasp her hand in a last grasp, bid her think of him, and pray for him, and watch for his return; *then* he thought, and almost believed, that he could take up his staff and his scrip, and depart without repining for

the modern El Dorado where he was to win the wealth that he so coveted ; but this he knew to be impossible. And then years ! —again he remembered with a sensation of dread which made him shiver in every limb —what formidable items they form in human existence ! A month, a week, even an hour of tyranny or treachery might suffice to rob him of Alice for ever ; and without *her*—without the one bright and blessed vision, which now compensated for so many bitter realities, what would existence become to him ?

How little can those who are surrounded by loving relations, and cradled in family affections, conceive the sinking of that spirit which, in losing One, loses ALL ! It may be bitter—it is—to be called upon to part from any whom we love, but while there are yet others left to feel with us, to mingle their

tears with ours, to comprehend, and to sympathise with our sorrow, there is still hope for the future, there is still solace in the present; but where the circle has been narrowed by death, or distance, or estrangement, and that two loving beings remain alone, knit to each other by the fondest ties; when they feel and know that their world is in themselves, and that all beyond is uncertain and unstable, then indeed is the anguish one for which language has no name; a grief which "will not be comforted" by any earthly agency; an agony which enters into the soul, and there makes its abiding-place.

It was a terrible hour for the young man, as he sat thus wrestling with his most sacred and absorbing feelings; but his pride conquered at last.

"She must not wed a beggar! And here

—here—in the country of my fathers, such is the name with which I may be branded with impunity by the disdainful lips of the more prosperous. Why do I hesitate? All further delay would but betray a moral cowardice of which I should be ashamed. My last hope here is lost. I must consent once more to become the recipient of the bounty of others, and then gird myself to my task, and work out my own freedom from all past and future obligations. Yes, I will go to Australia as my kinsmen have counselled me to do. If I succeed, well! I shall win Alice Ravensdale, and be once more a Lyle. If I fail, my grave will be dug in a strange soil, where none can come to look upon it with a mocking eye—the ruined gentleman will sleep as soundly as the peasant—sleep in his obscurity, and be forgotten! What a strange, wayward fate is

mine ; I possess within myself all the elements of happiness ; the grand and the beautiful awaken my holiest sympathies ; and I would love my fellow-man, would he only suffer me to do so, with fervour and sincerity—and yet I am an outcast. I have committed no crime, and yet society rejects me. I would labour to earn my livelihood, and even the boon of labour is denied to me. And the one bright dream of my manhood—the one sustaining hope of my existence—which would still cheat me with a fantastic and delusive future—never to be attained—that too I must resign : or, should I still madly cling to it, I must hide my secret deep in my own heart, and suffer no one—not even *her*—to suspect my weakness.”

He rose, folded the letter of Miss Ravensdale slowly and carefully, and then placed it

•

in his bosom. That letter was the talisman from whence he was to derive strength for this new and culminating trial. Without the assurances which it contained, he felt that he *could* not have left the land that held Alice; but she, in her woman-love and woman-truth, had furnished him with arms against himself.

•
CHAPTER VI.

THREE OLD MAIDS.

HAVING resolved to brave his destiny, Octavius finally, with a deep and painful sigh, which sounded like the very echo of departed happiness, took his hat and gloves from the table, descended the stairs hastily, and left the house. The die was cast ! He had no longer any common interest with the crowd amid which he moved ; they were hastening upon their several errands of business or of pleasure ; some to add to their

worldly wealth, or to impede the fortune of their neighbour when it threatened to affect their own ; others to meet a friend, or a wife, or a loved companion ; or to make one in a banquet, or a burial, or a brawl ; the glad and the gay to the marriage or the christening feast ; the sad and the sorrowing to the funeral train, and the house of mourning ; but all busy ; all earnest in their various errands ; all linked to the common humanity around them ; and all heedless of the pale and solitary young man, who, with bent head and vacant glance, strode on, regardless of surrounding objects, absorbed in his own painful meditations.

How strange it appears to those who are smitten by a great sorrow, or overborne by a heavy trial, that all should go on about them as calmly and as methodically as though there were not one aching heart

ering and throbbing away its life-blood,
burthening the passing wind with sighs ;
; the inner world of anguish should
ken no sympathy with the outer world
action ; that a " great gulf " should yawn
ween the happy and the wretched, visible
y to the sufferers ! And yet this is a
re every-day affair—a natural consequence
civilization, with its manifold individual
erests and individual passions ; nor does
ever claim a thought until it is felt.

Brompton—Wood-End—For the moment
e pilgrimage of Octavius was terminated.
ave as he had thought himself in the first
rst of his determination, he yet shrank
om his encounter with Mr. Lancaster,
hose debtor he was to become for the first
me. True, the gift had been voluntarily
ffered, not solicited ; but the unhappy young
ian still felt that it would be conferred with

an effort, and perhaps coupled with an exhibition of compassionate patronage, which which must wound him to the very soul.

Joseph Lancaster was not, as he well knew, "a cheerful giver;" there was no widow's blessing on his head, no orphan's prayer lisped for his happiness; he was simply a just man who *paid his way*, owed nothing, and asked nothing; a man of order and economy, whose family, and world, and sympathies centred in himself. The very novelty of his present generosity must consequently appear a marvel even to his own mind—a thing to dwell on, to discourse of, and to register in his memory as a wrong which he had committed against his own interests.

Bitter convictions these, for a high, proud, and generous spirit, condemned by circumstances to stand indebted to the mean and

sh nature which it spurned ! And so
vious, with a morbid dread of the arro-
; self-righteousness of a narrow spirit,
ed for once beyond its ordinary limits by
unaccustomed impulse of feeling, decided
he first place upon declaring his decision
Miss Penelope ; and of deferring to the
moment his mortifying interview with
less kindly cousin.

Little did he dream of the usurious in-
est which Mr. Joseph Lancaster anti-
ated for that gift whose acceptance must,
he fondly believed, insure to himself "an
indant great reward."

If the motives of men were only as visible
their deeds, what startling contrasts should
; sometimes see between the good effected
the hand, and the evil nourished in the
art !

The three spinsters of Wood-End were

seated in the same cozy parlour, in which they had received the visit of Mr. Lancaster, and engaged in precisely the same occupations. Theirs, indeed, was a tranquil existence which knew little variation, and wherein the smallest event furnished an epoch; and it was strange and startling to pass from a busy world into that still, shady room, and to sit down among those calm, passionless women, who seemed to have no share in the toil and turmoil of the crowd without.

But to enjoy, and to appreciate such a transition, the mind must be at ease; the burning brain and the throbbing pulse burn and throb only the more wildly for a time under such uncongenial contact; the labouring spirit is rebuked, not soothed, by the unnatural collision; nor is the shock experienced by the Muscovite patient, when he

selfish nature which it spurned ! And so Octavius, with a morbid dread of the arrogant self-righteousness of a narrow spirit, forced for once beyond its ordinary limits by an unaccustomed impulse of feeling, decided in the first place upon declaring his decision to Miss Penelope ; and of deferring to the last moment his mortifying interview with his less kindly cousin.

Little did he dream of the usurious interest which Mr. Joseph Lancaster anticipated for that gift whose acceptance must, as he fondly believed, insure to himself " an abundant great reward."

If the motives of men were only as visible as their deeds, what startling contrasts should we sometimes see between the good effected by the hand, and the evil nourished in the heart !

The three spinsters of Wood-End were

as the ascetic hugs to his bosom the shirt of haircloth, and the spiked girdle, that pierce into his flesh : he must dwell only on his real, and tangible, and worldly trials ; trials that all can see, and consequently appreciate ; and remain silent where the spirit would fain have cried aloud, and asked for comfort.

“ You cannot mean it, Octavius ! ” exclaimed Miss Penelope, when her nephew at length explained his purpose : “ My dear boy, it is impossible that you can mean it ! Pray do not, by so rash a determination, afford such a triumph to your cold-hearted cousin Lancaster. I do assure you that you will be guilty of a very great imprudence. Take better advice before you ultimately decide. Consult Mr. Brunton, and your fast friend Trevor. I am quite sure that neither of them will encourage you to leave England.”

“ I know it, aunt. They do not. And while I had a hope of obtaining the securities I mentioned to you, I was equally, and even more averse than themselves to take so extreme a step ; but as I have signally failed in the attempt, I must embrace the only prospect now open to me.”

“ My dear Mr. Octavius ;” said Miss Hallingford timidly, and with a blush which for a moment appeared to renew the freshness of her youth ; “ since your aunt confided to us the nature of your disappointment, I have consulted with my sister upon the subject ; and with her consent I am happy to be able to offer to you at least one of those securities. As single women, we could not, of course, appear openly in such a business, but we have made arrangements with a legal friend, whose name will be a proper substitute for our own ; so, like

dear Miss Penelope, I do entreat that you will abandon this emigration scheme, and occupy yourself forthwith in finding another surety to act with Mr. Johnson. We really cannot spare you; and therefore you see that we are serving ourselves, not you."

Octavius did not reply; he could not; he only buried his face in his hands; but the hot tears which forced their way, and fell upon the table over which he leant, spoke for him more eloquently than words. And let none despise those tears; they were wrung from him by gratitude, not weakness. The vexed spirit was overwrought; he had borne up bravely against wounded pride, deceived trust, and unlooked-for disappointment; but the voice of kindness and hope had subdued the strong man within him, and called up, as by the touch of a magician's wand, all the pure fresh

feelings of his youth, and faith in his fellow-beings.

Oh, woman! let the scorner flout, and the worldling affect to despise you; yours is the hour of suffering; yours the season of grief; when, as with the finger of an angel, you can write peace where there was no peace, and shed light where all before was darkness. It is a holy mission; and, where it is righteously performed, you may well afford that the proud ones of the earth should pass you by unheeded and unhonoured, in the happy assurance that the cherubim who people the Heavens will look down with smiles, and record your strivings after mercy in the Book of Life. Let the strong man strike the blow, and inflict the wound; it is a gentler and a better office to bind up the broken heart, and to raise the drooping head!

Octavius did not weep alone. For a few instants there was silence in that modest parlour, broken only by the sobs of warm-hearted Miss Pen, to whom the generous proposal of her two friends was as unexpected as to her nephew himself; but those sobs soon gave place to a still more touching manifestation of her gratitude, as she hastily rose from her seat, and flung her arms first about the neck of Miss Hallingford, and then about that of her sister, striving inarticulately to express all that she felt for such unlooked-for kindness.

“How good you are, my dears; how very good, to do for him what I was unable to do! How little did I think when I told you that I had failed in my endeavour to help him, that you had determined to spare me the grief of such a separation. I am old now, and have no time to make new

affections ; I have only him and you to love in this world—only him and you to care for me—and it *was* a bitter pang. And he will not wrong you, Agnes—he will not wrong you, Clarissa. I know the dear boy's nature. He has been unfortunate, but not faulty. He will do his duty like an honest man ; and you will have no reason to mourn over a misplaced confidence.”

“ My dear Penelope,” interposed Miss Hal-lingford, with a glimmering attempt at a smile, though the tears still trickled down her face, “ what a waste of words is this ! Of course we are quite aware that Mr. Octavius is incapable of a dishonourable action ; and that he has too much good sense to feel humbled by the help of three elderly gentlewomen. And so that matter is arranged, and he has only to look round him for his other security ; and, old as we

are, we may yet live to see him a wealthy banker in his turn. Why, bless me! I could almost fancy that we were acting the first chapter in a domestic novel. We may hear of a fair daughter, a happy marriage, and the strong boxes of the father-in-law passing into the possession of our young friend. There is a vast deal more romance in real life than your very serious people are willing to acknowledge; and as for me, I really believe that every woman upon earth is a novel in herself if she were only read aright. Some of the tales are tragic enough, perhaps; so on the whole it may be as well that each has the privilege of keeping her own secret. *We*, however, are not called upon at present to perform a tragedy; so ring the bell, Clarissa, and order the wine to be brought in; we must all get up our spirits. Or rather, I had forgotten, here are the

keys, go and get it yourself; but wipe your eyes first, or Martha will fancy that some great misfortune has happened."

"Miss Hallingford," said Octavius, for the first time raising his head as the younger sister left the room, "I cannot thank you. I have no words to utter which would not shame my heart. What the manna was to the Israelites in the wilderness, your noble trust and kindness are to me. My life will be too short to prove my thankfulness, let the matter end as it may. But even in this moment of emotion I must speak out, fully and frankly, for I owe you a confidence as unbounded as your generosity. The vision of success which you have evoked can never be realized, at least as you have sketched it; although, through your means, I may indeed become not only a happy but a prosperous man. I will not shrink from telling you the whole

truth; and my good aunt will forgive me when I confess that the prospect of leaving my country, and separating myself from her—from her who, alone of all my relations, now takes an interest in my wretched struggles—was not the only, nor the greatest trial, with which I had to contend. My affections are engaged—deeply, irrevocably—and therefore I need not say that my contemplated exile was like a wrenching asunder of soul and body.”

“My dear boy! what wretched imprudence,” murmured Miss Penelope.

“Judge, therefore,” pursued the young man, heedless of his good kinswoman’s apostrophe; “the magnitude of the debt that I shall owe you. Judge, therefore, what I must feel; and how strenuously I shall exert all my energies to prove myself worthy of your confidence. And you will have made

me a better as well as a happier man ; for I had begun to doubt that sympathy or kindness were yet to be found in the world. I felt myself an alien and an outcast ; I was reckless, and you have renewed my better nature. I think that I shall be more able even to bear subsequent disappointment now ; for I shall remember that life is not all a desert, while one spot yet remains upon its surface, freshened and hallowed by the best and brightest of all human feelings. I have been sorely tried, Miss Hallingford ; but your goodness is an earnest of better days to come, and as such I joyfully accept and welcome it."

"But you must not think of marrying upon ninety pounds a-year, Octavius ; I can assure you from experience that it would be utterly impossible to secure even a decent existence to your wife upon so limited an

income as that ; while as to bringing up a family—upon my honour, my dear boy, you have made me quite nervous ;” said Miss Penelope, in evident consternation.

The young man smiled painfully.

“Do not be alarmed, my dear aunt ;” he replied, as a faint colour rose to his cheek ; “it would appear that it is my fate to be indebted to your sex for all my hopes of success in life. It has been my misfortune to love an heiress, and my pride to have been beloved in my turn ; but I could not urge my suit with honour while I had not even a home to offer her ; whereas—”

“Delightful !” exclaimed Miss Hallingford, with all a woman’s interest in a tale of love and marriage ; “then we shall work out our novel at last ! How *very* glad I am that we shall be in the thick of the plot. But

here is the wine ; and now we will drink the health of the bride-elect."

"First, however, my dear Madam," said Octavius, making an effort to rally his spirits, "I must furthermore confide to you that I have a rival."

"Of course, of course ;" was the laughing retort of the cheerful spinster ; "or our story would be flat indeed. But I suppose that he is not dangerous?"

"It would ill become me to decide."

"Very modest and proper on your part ; and yet I confess that I am by no means scared."

"Who is he?" asked Miss Pen abruptly.

"Mr. Frederick Stainton."

"Oh, indeed !" said the spinster, struggling against a smile, while her turban oscillated most alarmingly ; "now then I read the riddle that I found it so hard to solve.

So, you entered the lists against the curled and perfumed popinjay, who is his mother's darling. How could you be so rash, when you must from the first have foreseen the inevitable result of so dangerous a competition? You are a bold man, Octavius Lyle! No wonder that you were forbidden to continue your lessons at Minerva Lodge; for I need not ask where your heart was lost."

"You are right, aunt; but press me no further. The kindness of your friends was so unexpected, that I am quite unable to enter into particulars with any coherency. Thus much, however, I may say, that I shall not take so important a step as that which I now contemplate, without a full conviction of your approval."

Such is youth! Octavius had only planted one foot upon the ladder of success, and he

had already forgotten that the other still remained fixed upon the cold unsympathetic earth. One star had risen into the sky of his life's hope; and he overlooked the disheartening fact that others must gleam out before the darkness could be dispersed. Nothing is lasting in this world. Time, in rustling its pinions, rains consolation even upon the keenest sorrow; the future possesses its own magic, and rejects the worn-out sufferings of the past. The most morbid mind cannot altogether resist its influence, but lends itself willingly to the transient delusion; forgetful for the moment that the *present* must be conquered, ere that future, so fair but afar off, can be secured.

The memory came back full and fresh upon Octavius, however, in his solitary walk home from Wood-End—vividly, sharply, and painfully, as unpleasant truths always come

in the first hour of moral reaction ; and by the time that he reached his own door, his heart was once more sick, and his hope had faded and vanished, like the sun-glints of autumn before the clouds of a coming storm.

CHAPTER VII.

A WAR OF WITS.

“AND so this is to be the end of all ;” mused Mr. Reginald Lyle, as he sat with the “Morning Post” in his hand beside the remnants of his breakfast.

“Well, I shall be quoted in the newspapers as a pious and worthy man, so alive to the misery of my fellow beings that I felt it to be my duty to endow hospitals, enrich ragged schools, found alms-houses, and purchase my place in paradise by bestowing

upon the poor and the afflicted what I was no longer able either to enjoy, or to carry with me. A notable triumph truly, to be lauded for a posthumous charity which entails no single sacrifice on the giver! Out upon such dilatory munificence! which to my eyes only conveys the miserable impression that the superb benefactor of his species was a being so cut off from the sympathies and affections of his fellows, that he had passed through life uncared for and unloved; that no heart had been linked with his; no fond hand smoothed his pillow; no smile lighted up his path; that he was one who had earned no gratitude, and paid none; but had been a mere floating atom, driven hither and thither, with no congenial resting-place or ultimate purpose.

“And yet, to have toiled and striven for such as these! To pay at their anticipated

price the false endearments, the hollow flatteries, and the feigned respect of a group of mercenary worldlings ; truly, the alternative is a pleasant one ! I begin now to feel that my whole existence has been one gross mistake. I might have had a home and a family ; a wife to cling to me in my old age, and children to reverence my grey hairs. I might have created a world about me full of gentle affections, and kindly sympathies, and household ties—have been necessary to the happiness of others ; an object of love and interest to those whom I had cherished and protected in their helplessness ; and who would, in their turn, have watched over me, and tended me in my old age. But such regrets are vain. As I have sown, so must I reap. Not one of *these*, not one, can fill up the void. I could have honoured honest poverty ; I could have tolerated even

modest wealth ; but what have I found to recompense me for a long life of toil and exile ? Vapouring self-sufficiency, arrogant prosperity, assumed importance, inane affectation, and insolent defiance.

“ And yet I had hoped better from that boy—and why should I not still hope ? He is young and reckless ; he has been the scape-goat of his more fortunate relations ; he has been rendered desperate by ill-fortune. I will not despair even now. Who knows ? I must see him again. There is something high-spirited and independent in his resolution to tempt this last struggle with the world. But I will not forego my resolution. I will do all, or nothing. I must know more of his actual resources. They tell me that he has no employment, no prospects ; and yet he lives on, and wears at least the external appearance of a gentleman. I cannot

solve the mystery. Can it be that poor Pen, out of her paltry pittance, enables him thus to drag on a dreary and precarious existence? It must be so; for I have read the lying merchant and the sordid clerk beyond all possibility of doubt, as well as the stately and selfish mother of those two insufferable idiots, my fashionable great-nephews. No, no; he has had no help there.

“ Poor Pen ! she has assuredly a claim upon me. She is the only memory left to me of the home of my boyhood ; a cold and a cheerless home, it is true, but still the only one that I ever had. I have carried her in my arms as a lad, and pressed my lips to her cheek, and called her sister. She cannot remember this, it was too long ago ; but she may have heard of it, and been pained by the churlish recognition of the cynical old man, who refused to renew those close ties of

kindred and affection. Well, Brunton will shortly be here, and I must talk to him of this.

“But this boy, this boy, who amid his presumed poverty has been the only one to assert his independence, and to set me and my money-bags at nought; he troubles me—An orphan, and bearing my own name too! Not trailing it in the mire like Percival, but it may be, as anxious as myself to uphold its respectability. Still I must do nothing rashly; he may be as false as the rest, and have simply evinced more tact than they had wit to display. I must be wary for my own sake; at my age the gold so earnestly coveted by others is of comparatively little worth to myself; but I would not lose the lingering hope that there may be at least one example left of lofty high-mindedness in this grasping and greedy world. But this

very hope must make me cautious ; for were I to be cheated by a stripling, I should cease altogether to have faith in my fellow-creatures. Human nature is tenacious of wrong ; the thorn of treachery having once entered the heart, inflicts a festering wound which never closes ; and even while we bring ourselves to forgive the hand that smites us, we despise the hand which guides it ; and neither faith nor affection can exist with contempt. Our hearts may remain warm, but the warmth is ungenial ; and a blighted blossom never produces a healthful fruit."

Mr. Lyle closed his eyes, let the paper fall from his hand, and sank into a still deeper reverie. For the first time since his return to England he felt thoroughly disheartened. The change of climate was too violent at his age ; it had told painfully upon him, and he was aware of it. The season of procrastina-

tion was passing rapidly ; he had a heavy duty to fulfil ; but still he clung to the caprice by which he had amused so many years of his life ; it had become an idiosyncrasy too powerful to be resisted ; and it mastered him like a vital disease.

As he had anticipated, the lawyer was shortly afterwards announced.

“ Well, my good friend ;” said the Anglo-Mexican, as he extended his hand to the visitor ; “ can you congratulate me on my emancipation from at least one of my difficulties ?”

“ I am able to wish you joy on your freedom from all.”

Mr. Lyle shook his head.

“ It is a fact, I assure you. Everything has been terminated without a single important difficulty. The cargo of the ‘ Firefly ’ has been sold most advantageously ; and I

have, according to your instructions, already invested the proceeds. The few bills which I have been compelled to accept are undeniable, and may be turned into money at any moment, with very little sacrifice; and, altogether, I feel the greatest confidence in your approval of every step that I have taken."

"You have a right to do so, for if zeal can insure success I might at once lay aside all anxiety, even were I inclined to suffer myself to be anxious once on the subject of money-making; but we will not examine all those documents at present, so replace them in your pocket for awhile. I have been musing in my solitude, and have no head for business this morning. Besides, I am sick of this eternal routine of pounds, shillings, and pence, which it irritates one's

temper to lose, and hardens one's heart to gain."

The lawyer glanced up in astonishment.

"Ay," pursued his companion, in the same depressed tone; "I see your surprise; but reflect for an instant, and you will cease to wonder at what I say. Can you tell me of one single hour of happiness for which I am indebted to this gold that I have been heaping up for nearly half a century?"

"It will afford you *many* whenever you care to secure them."

"That is the old story; the fable by which we are all fooled; and I believed it, like the rest, until the period of trial came; but now I tell you, and tell you advisedly, that I do not anticipate any such result in my own

case. Do you think that I value the flatteries of Mr. Percival Lyle as tributes to my personal virtues?"

"You owe him more than compliments;" said Brunton with a light laugh.

"True, true;" and the eyes of the old merchant twinkled in their turn; "you allude to the Madeira. And it is come, Sir; it is safely lodged beneath my roof; sun-dereed for ever from the residue of the 'immense stock,' in the cellars of Bedford Square. How much per dozen, think you, that I am expected to pay for that choice vintage?"

"I rather imagine that your nephew never anticipated its acceptance."

"Of course he did not, or he would not have made the offer. Had I believed otherwise, I would rather have drank your Thames water unfiltered than have given

house-room to a pint of it; and I would, at this present moment, risk the value of the contents of every bin that he possesses, that he could not repeat the present were it to secure the reversion of my whole property. Brunton, I loathe that man; loathe and despise him. He is knave as well as fool, or I am no true man; and it delights me to take him in his own toils. But we will talk no more of him."

"You have not, I suppose, seen anything of your unfortunate nephew Octavius?"

"Nothing;" said Mr. Lyle, raising himself in his chair, and fixing an earnest look on his companion; "what have you to tell me? Is he still resolved to leave England?"

"So Miss Penelope assures me; and it is really a pity; for, with all his imprudence, he

is a fine young fellow, and worthy of a better fate."

"Why do you affirm him to be improvident?"

"On my honour, I cannot reply to that question. It was a most unwarrantable inference on my part; as, with the exception of his reckless and unreflecting charities, I have never even heard of an act of extravagance of which he has been guilty; and most certainly not one of profligacy or dissipation."

"Indeed!"

"Positively. But I know not how it is, we are so prone to couple the idea of imprudence with want of success in this world, that, ungenerous as the notion is, we all appear to do it, with or without warrant, as a mere matter of course."

“What is he doing at present?”

“Nothing.”

“How, then, does he contrive to live?”

“I can scarcely say; but it would appear that he has friends who will not see him actually starve.”

“He wears a better coat than I do,” said the host, who, with the extraordinary affectation of many wealthy men, appeared to take an inexplicable pride in appearing less well-dressed than his servants.”

“That fact proves nothing;” replied the lawyer: “he must have made a great effort to appear before *you* in a becoming manner.”

“Which means that he is indebted to the long-suffering of his tailor for the

trimness of his apparel. I am sorry for him, for the day of reckoning must come."

Mr. Brunton moved uneasily upon his chair.

"I had half-promised him a stool in my office," he said hesitatingly.

"Well?"

"Well, Mr. Lyle, I changed my mind, and refused it."

"You were afraid to trust him?"

"By no means."

"May I then ask your reason?"

"A caprice; a fancy; I thought he should aspire to something better."

"Ha!"

"And something better offered. A man who had long known him, and who appreciated the value of his services, had an opportunity of recommending a youth of talent

and probity to a situation in an old-established and respectable banking-house ; a situation, humble indeed, but still desirable enough for an individual like himself, as it secured to the holder an income of ninety pounds a-year."

"And why did he not accept it?"

"Simply because two securities were required in a thousand pounds each, and that he could not procure them."

"Impossible !" exclaimed the Anglo-Mexican ; "why did he not apply to his cousin the merchant?"

"He did."

"And what was the impediment?"

Brunton shrugged his shoulders. "Mr. Percival Lyle has an expensive family ; his commercial transactions are extensive ; his name is not to be lightly risked. In short, he declined."

The old merchant clenched his hands, and looked fiercely into the fire, but he did not utter a syllable.

“Disappointed, though not discouraged ;” pursued his companion ;—“but I am telling my tale loosely, and must begin with the beginning. The first application made by your nephew was to his bachelor-cousin, Mr. Joseph Lancaster.”

“And what said he ?”

“He said, and with great truth, that ‘a prudent man never affixes his name to any document by which his credit may be impaired, or his honour involved.’ ”

“Had he then any suspicion of the young man’s honesty ?”

“Certainly not ; for he followed up his refusal by offering him, as he himself lately informed you, a hundred pounds out of his own hoards, if he would consent to

emigrate to Australia in a vessel then about to sail."

"So this emigration scheme was really his suggestion, then?"

"It was; nor has he misled you upon a single point; for not only did he engage to provide the promised sum, but he also induced Miss Penelope, to whom the project was especially distasteful, to make a similar promise."

"Poor Pen!"

"All this, however, upon a stated condition."

"What condition?"

"That he should sail in the next ship."

"And he consented?"

"Not immediately. The young man clung to his country, and continued to hope against hope. You remember that *cælum non*

animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.

So he made another attempt to procure the necessary securities."

"From whom?"

"From myself."

"And you?—"

"I refused in my turn; but I did not advise him to emigrate."

"And why did you refuse?"

"My *dear* Sir;" replied the lawyer with a bland smile; "his own relatives had set me the example."

"True," said Mr. Lyle stiffly.

There was a momentary silence; after which Brunton once more resumed the subject. "Thus foiled, it would appear that Octavius has now definitely resolved on his departure."

"Why did he not apply to me before he

came to such a determination?" asked the old merchant.

"That is a question which I am not competent to answer. He probably considered that you would have regarded an application of that nature as a liberty, and did not wish to incur your additional displeasure."

"Ha; he is then himself of opinion that he has given me offence?"

"I believe that such is his impression. But may I venture to ask, Mr. Lyle, whether you really would have met his views in this instance if he had hazarded the request?"

"Why not? I could have become one of his sureties myself, and have authorized you to act as the other?"

"And will you still do so?"

No. I never force a favour upon any
I wash my hands of the affair."

That is unfortunate ; for yesterday the
boy had a fresh glimmer of hope. The
d of Miss Penelope, Miss Hallingford,
lady with whom she has lived for years,
re that his aunt was powerless to assist
, offered herself as one of his securities, in
event of his being enabled to procure a
nd."

' And you still refused, Brunton ?'

' I did.'

Mr. Lyle fidgeted upon his seat, and
seared about to speak, but he re-
ined.

" Thus you see, my dear Sir ;" continued the
rtinacious lawyer ; " that unless you put
th a helping hand, he has no alternative
t to follow the advice of his two cousins,
d to emigrate."

“I have nothing to do with it.”

“Decidedly not, unless such should be your pleasure. Your nephew has no legal claim on you whatever.”

“He has no claim upon me, either legal or moral. But enough of this verbal skirmishing. Tell me candidly, for as his relative it behoves me to know this, how is he now supporting himself? Or rather, who is supporting him?”

Brunton looked distressed, but he was prompt in his reply.

“He employs his evenings in keeping the books of a tradesman in the neighbourhood of his lodging.”

The hot blood rose to the very brow of the old merchant.

“And his days?” he asked; “to what does he devote them?”

“To the education of the son of my !

clerk, who, in return, provides him with a chamber in his house ; and also, I believe, in endeavouring to procure some more lucrative employment."

"So, Sir;" said Reginald Lyle sternly; "we have now lodged him, and it may be partially clothed him ; but he cannot live on air. Who feeds him?"

"Trevor does his best, I imagine ; but I am really ignorant of the details of his existence."

"The details—" murmured the Anglo-Mexican, as if unconsciously ; "the details of poverty and hopelessness !—Brunton," he exclaimed abruptly, "you are playing me false !"

"I, Mr. Lyle ! Do you consider the full bearing of your words ?"

"I do ; and I repeat them. Now, answer

me like a true man. Why did you refuse to take Octavius Lyle into your office?"

"Because the proposal did not suit my views; and was, to speak frankly, altogether disagreeable to me."

"Why did you decline to become one of his securities?"

"I had my reasons, and I had a right to them. I gave him as satisfactory a reply on that head as he had received from either Mr. Percival Lyle, or Mr. Joseph Lancaster; and a far more categorical one than that with which you yourself favoured me a few minutes back when I asked if you would lend your own name."

"Had you been ignorant of my resolution respecting the disposal of my property, should you have refused to befriend him in either case?"

“Mr. Lyle;” said the lawyer with a sudden assumption of dignity; “you are my client, and as such I respect you; you are my friend, and as such I regard you; but I am not responsible to you, nor to any man, for the motives of my private conduct. Had I desired to embarrass myself with the trouble and annoyance of building up the fortunes of a stripling, I would have married, and at least endured the slavery for a son of my own. That I have not done so proves, that I had no vocation of the kind.”

“You are harsh, Brunton.”

“No;” said the lawyer: “but I am a plain-spoken man. I did not consider myself—I repeat it—called upon to do for Mr. Octavius Lyle what his own family had refused.”

“Then I am to understand that you have

never assisted the lad, either directly or indirectly?"

"Upon my word, Mr. Lyle;" was the somewhat impatient rejoinder; "you must excuse me if I remark that you are exceeding your privilege. I will answer your inferred question by a more direct one. Do you wish your nephew to starve while you are playing upon the vices and follies of your other relations?"

The old merchant smiled; a little grimly, it may be, but still he smiled as he extended his hand to his companion.

"I thought as much, skirmish as skilfully as you might;" he said; "and I thank you."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST INVESTMENT.

"BRUNTON," said Mr. Lyle suddenly looking up, after a lengthened silence which his companion had made no effort to terminate, "what of the 'Firefly?' what did her cargo produce?"

"There is some slight excess over £13,000."

"Good. I have been thinking of poor old Pen, Brunton; she has unconsciously shamed me and my selfishness. That is but

a pittance of hers, and yet she has contrived to do some good with it while I am living on, a burthen to myself, and a happiness to no one else on earth ; and the Miss Hallingford with whom she lives must be a worthy woman."

"They are both worthy women ; for there are two of them, maiden sisters, who have but one common interest."

"I understand ; it was a *joint* security ; and tells as well for their sisterly affection, as it does for their genial and kindly nature. Old maids, indeed ! It is easy for the light-headed and scatter-brained fools of the world to sneer at old maids ; but just contrast the disinterested and confiding generosity of these two worthy single women with the sordid caution of my time-serving nephews, and tell me which, when weighed in the balance, will be found wanting ? But to

return to Penelope. I think it would be well to sink the sum of six or eight thousand pounds from the thirteen you mention, in a life-annuity for her—trammelled, however, by the express condition that she shall not be able to raise money upon it without incurring a forfeiture of the whole. I do not wish that my relatives should be looking forward to my death in order to share my spoils.”

“The arrangement is an admirable one, and the boon well bestowed.” said the lawyer.

“And mark you, Brunton;” resumed the old merchant; “this donation in no way negatives my former determination, for I look upon the sum thus appropriated as totally independent of the real bulk of my property, such as I transferred it to England. It is simply the result of a last

precarious speculation, which has providentially succeeded ; but it might have done otherwise ; the vessel might have been wrecked, or the cargo proved unmarketable, and thus in either case have turned out a failure."

"Just so—" said the lawyer, with a quiet chuckle at the ingenious sophistry of a generous heart striving to justify to itself an act of kindness.

"Strange !" pursued Mr. Lyle thoughtfully ; "most strange does it seem, that in the whole circle of my newly-formed kindred, that old woman is the only one towards whom my heart has really warmed. And yet she is a mere scarecrow, with that muslin pagoda on her head, and her quaint antediluvian fashions. However, I owe her some requital for the unjust judgment I passed on her upon my first arrival. It is wonderful how

the consciousness of possessing power, no matter of how paltry a description, can jaundice the human mind! You remember the offer that she made me, and which I at once attributed to an impulse of self-interest? Well, it seems that when she proposed to give up her home in order to render mine more genial, it was in truth a proposal for which I ought to have been grateful, while I met it with suspicion and distrust. I thank her for the lesson, and am not likely to forget it."

"That she made the offer in all sincerity and singleness of heart, I feel convinced;" said Brunton; "but you must remember that she was not the only individual who expressed a wish to serve you. May not each and all have been equally sincere? Mr. Lancaster, for instance, who refused to waste his interest upon Octavius, did not

hesitate in pledging himself to exert it in your behalf."

"True; and Mr. Percival Lyle volunteered to cede to me a share in his own prosperity; while Mrs. Stainton was ready to present me to a score of her fashionable friends. Yet I confess to you that I feel little gratitude to either, and mistrust all their motives collectively."

"Time will show:" said the lawyer.

"Ay, time; the true touchstone of moral worth! What a wonder-worker is time! How many apparently wasted years are quietly unravelling the tangled skein of character and principle. When I was younger, and less wary than I have since become, how often has my heart sprung almost with worship towards men for whom I have now learnt to experience nothing save contempt and loathing; while, on the other hand,

how many have I passed by on the great highway of life without the quickening of a pulse, whom I subsequently felt it an honour and privilege to claim as friends ! But here, Brunton, here, I have no hope of such a result ; the mask has been loosely worn, the joints of the armour are vulnerable at every point. No ; with the exception of poor Pen, the plaything of my boyhood, I have faith in none of them."

"That is a sweeping clause, my good Sir ;" remonstrated Brunton ; "and it almost tempts me to inquire what cause the younger members of your family can have given you for such wholesale suspicion ?"

"The younger members !" echoed Mr. Lyle contemptuously : "Let me see. We have first the Messrs. Stainton—two apt pupils of a worldly mother, who had read

their lesson thoroughly. Think you that I was so dull as not to see that my ambition—the ambition of the plodding old merchant, who had spent his life among ledgers and invoices,—was to be flattered by the acquaintance of a Bishop, and the relationship of a Lady Harriet, both of whom I quite believe to be as impalpable and as invisible as the far-famed Mrs. Harris of Dickens? A lame plot, Sir, and a threadbare device; so transparent that nothing save a blind house-fly would have been fool enough to get entangled in such a web. And then we have the pretty young ladies in the square; they had been tutored in their turn; they were all sweetness to their nabob-uncle; all urbanity and softness; but did you heed their bearing towards that meek, spirit-stricken governess of theirs? No; I repeat that I would not

trust to one of them. Hypocrisy in the old is a hateful vice, but in the young it is hideous and unnatural."

"Well, my good Sir, proceed."

"I have done."

"Pardon me, you have as yet made no mention of Octavius."

"True. But if you require that I should do so, I can only say that I consider him to be less worthy of confidence than all the rest. He has no self-government."

"But you cannot tax him with hypocrisy."

"Perhaps not. He has bolder failings."

"Name them."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Reginald Lyle, striving to suppress a smile; "he is not to be trusted. He is in debt to his tailor."

“That I deny.”

“Ha, you deny it! May I ask whence you derive your authority to do so?”

“My authority is good, and that must suffice.”

“You take a strange interest in this hot-headed young man, my friend.”

“I have no wish to deny it; I know him; slightly, it is true, but still sufficiently to feel satisfied that he is well worthy the regard of an honest man. Individuals of my profession are rarely deceived in their estimate of those with whom they come in contact. Distrust and suspicion are the leading features of our calling; and when we do err in our verdict, I fear that it is generally on the wrong side. I like the youth; and I warn you, Mr. Lyle, that should you cast him off—as you would fain affect to do—you will regret it when it is too late. I enter

no plea for your other nephews ; you have there had an ample opportunity to judge for yourself, and all interference on my part would be impertinent. But that poor orphan boy——”

“Has shown me marked disrespect.”

“You do not think so, Mr. Lyle ; you cannot. Reflect on his position. Did *you* never, in your youth, revolt against mortification and undeserved contumely ? Did *you* never seek to assert yourself, even at the risk of your best interests, when you felt that you were unjustly oppressed ? And who placed the young man in the difficult situation where he had the misfortune to offend you ? He did not ask to be admitted beneath your roof, and to be a guest at your table ; he did not force himself upon your notice ; he did not seek to lay bare before you his daily trials,

and his hourly necessities. He was summoned, and he came ; he was questioned, and he answered bravely, like one who knew that he was your guest only on sufferance ; and who scorned to cringe, and whine, and flatter, in order to subserve his own interests."

"You are admirable in eloquence, but deficient in logic, my good Sir ;" said the merchant in an unsteady tone ; "the young man was not received on sufferance in my house ; he was not mortified ; he was not required to cringe or flatter. He was a bidden, and a welcome guest, like those about him ; and I simply invited him to bestow upon me an equal confidence."

"Sophistry, Sir, sophistry"—exclaimed the lawyer. "You were not ignorant of the tale that he must tell had he babbled and lied

like the rest ; and yet you probed him to the quick, and tempted him to emulate their baseness ! What had become sport to yourself, you should have felt could be nothing short of agony to him ; and yet you did not spare him ; and would you visit upon your victim the results of your own want of generosity ? I cannot—I *will* not believe it. Had Octavius Lyle been my own son that day, and had I known that the outbreak of his young spirit was to condemn him to a life of penury, I would have taken him to my heart, and forgiven his imprudence in consideration of the noble impulse for which he was to suffer."

"Enough, Brunton, enough ; I cannot bear it ;" said the old man, as he buried his face in his hands.

"And yet," pursued the lawyer with less vehemence " *he* must bear all the wretched-

ness that has been heaped upon him. And for what? He is driven from the house of one relation because, well educated, and endowed by nature with qualities in which they are deficient, he is a dangerous rival to her ignorant and presuming sons. I can excuse *that*—for the weakness of a mother for her children is at least deserving of respect. He is exiled from another where his poverty wounds the pride of a man who might raise him, if not to independence, at least to comfort; but who will not do so, because his sordid vanity is flattered by the opportunity of parading his own greatness before the eyes of a needy and struggling kinsman. He is scouted by a third because he brings neither power nor profit in his train! And then you require him to be patient. You exact from him the composure and the

serenity of the happy and the prosperous !
Mr. Lyle, do you deal fairly with him ?
Remember—I once more say—remember
that it is for the strong to show mercy ; and
you showed him none.”

“ How can you prove your accusation ? ”

“ By reminding you that you taunted him,
when he confessed his obligations to his
aunt.”

“ I did not think of the boy. I wanted
to make those two cold-blooded men speak
out and justify themselves ; I sought to
compel *them* to show themselves as they
really are ; when he turned upon me with a
sarcasm.”

“ But that sarcasm was not launched
against you. It was the cry of a wounded
spirit, and laid bare his heart before you.
You showed no pity ; and he withdrew from

your house, like one who felt that his presence was distasteful."

"Yes—without one word even of civil leave-taking."

"And he only did himself justice. What did you anticipate that he could say? Could he return his thanks for the reception that you had given him? No; you had no right to expect that he would do so. There is nothing more proud than honourable poverty; and Octavius scorned to follow the pitiful example of those about him, who had throughout the evening been offering up incense at the altar of your gold."

"The sacrifice was tolerated, not accepted."

"I know it, but he could not be supposed to understand the feelings of one to whom he was an utter stranger; and who,

moreover, appeared to derive such unalloyed gratification from the worship of which he was the object. Once more, I beseech of you, Mr. Lyle, not to suffer the poor young man to become an outcast and an exile."

"You are aware of my resolution, Brunton, and I will not interfere."

"And yet you accuse those of playing you false who would prevent this great wrong. Do you think that you were justified in such an accusation?"

"Do not resent my words; they were hastily uttered. You know that I am morbid upon that point."

"Morbid, indeed!" murmured the lawyer; "I wish that this matter were decided, for you are destroying your own peace."

"It is the penalty that I must pay for

my selfishness ;” said the merchant gloomily ;
“ but you are right ; the affair must be settled. I am sick at heart with all this buffoonery and falsehood ; and angry with myself for my weak indecision. Will you do me the favour to procure for me a list of the most popular metropolitan charities ? The most popular, you understand — for as I am driven to this alternative, I will have credit — and due credit — for my munificence. The ancient but faded name of Lyle shall be illustrated, even although it should only be in the ephemeral pages of a newspaper.”

Mr. Brunton rose.

“ Have you any further instructions for me, Mr. Lyle ? ”

“ None, I thank you. But perhaps you will favour me by taking the necessary steps regarding my half-sister’s annuity. We will

say eight thousand pounds, I think ; but you will oblige me by not overlooking the condition."

"Certainly. Every care shall be taken, Mr. Lyle, and the necessary documents submitted to you without delay."

"You are annoyed, Brunton."

"I have no right to feel annoyance ; I am not privileged to interfere with the views and wishes of my clients ; but I may perhaps, under the circumstances, be permitted to confess that I am deeply disappointed."

"And so am I—deeply—painfully."

"Your disappointment is at least gratuitous, Mr. Lyle ; and depends solely on your own pleasure."

"You would willingly have said on my own *caprice*, Brunton, had you not feared to give me offence ; but be just ; you know

that it is not so, and that I have bound myself by a vow."

"From which common sense can absolve you at any moment;" was the dry retort of the lawyer; "you have found a worthy object for your munificence, and what can you require more?"

"I have found nothing of the sort;" said the old merchant tartly; "my experience of your hot-headed favourite has not been so gratifying as to induce me to take him upon trust. If I were ten years younger, I would return to Lima. How often did I amuse and solace my solitary hours by dreaming of the home-existence which was to repay me for all my past privations; and encourage myself to believe that I should yet, in my old age secure the affection of at least one human being, knit to me alike by the ties of blood

and gratitude. But it was an idle fancy ; and I am now paying the price of my own folly. So long as we contemplate an object afar off, our imagination invests it with a poetry by which it assumes an unreal attraction that is at once dispelled by a nearer and more careful investigation—and thus it is with every anticipated enjoyment. Who ever recognised, even in the fruition of a long-cherished desire, the promise of its advent ?”

“ Many ; but certainly not those who have previously determined only to see the sunshine through their own prison.”

“ You are ungenerous, Brunton.”

“ I deny it ; I am simply annoyed to find that you so resolutely refuse to do justice to yourself. Is it rational that a man of your stamp should sacrifice his comfort, his peace of mind, and his memory to an idle whim ?

Mark what I tell you—If you indeed persist in your present purpose, you will infallibly fail to carry it out; for you will no sooner have left this world than your family will contest the validity of the Will. Such a disposition of your property will necessarily involve a suspicion of insanity; and I seriously question whether some of your relatives would hesitate to countenance such an hypothesis.”

“But you, at least, are aware that I am in the full possession of my mental faculties;” exclaimed the old gentleman nervously.

“My evidence might be overborne; in which case your property would, as a matter of course, be distributed among the whole of your surviving relatives—Staintons, Percivals, Lancasters, and Lyles; and this, I believe, was precisely the issue which you were anxious to avoid.”

"You know it was; and moreover it *shall not be*. We will talk more of this when I have had time to collect my ideas. —But who comes here? A visitor! That is a rare occurrence under my roof. Nay, nay, lay down your hat, my good friend, and do not abandon me to the intruders, be they whom they may."

"You must excuse me. I have urgent business at my chambers."

"I do not believe a word of it. Had you had your own way, you would have stayed here, contentedly, till dusk. Come, come; do not leave me in anger, Brunton, after bearing with me for so many years. I will reflect on what you have said; I will endeavour to see my way more clearly; and—who knows?—it is perhaps only because I have felt too much inclined to lean towards the neglected boy that I have so perti-

naciously opposed your arguments. At all events, you have done his cause no ill service to-day."

The lawyer smiled, and laid down his hat and cane, as the door of the dining-room opened, and Mr. Lancaster was announced.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

As usual, the gentleman under government had divested himself of his multitudinous wraps in the hall, and now stepped across the threshold in all the formality of his customary priggism.

“Good day to you, Mr. Lyle. Your servant, Mr. Brunton.” (This was his stereotyped salutation on all occasions.) “I was almost afraid that I should not find you

at home this fine morning ; that is, fine for the time of year, of course."

"I seldom leave the house so early in the day, except on business," said the host coldly.

"Ah, just so ; nor I either : that is to say, when I talk of the house I naturally mean the office. And our friend Mr. Brunton is, I apprehend, in the same case."

The lawyer bowed in silence.

"Am I, then, to infer that it is business which brings you here on the present occasion ?" asked Reginald Lyle.

"Why it is, and it is not, if you will tolerate such a paradox. I felt myself in a responsible situation, Mr. Lyle—a very responsible situation. I feared, moreover, that I had committed an imprudence ; and I have

consequently ventured to call, in order to ask your advice and assistance."

"You pay me a compliment. Has your friend the Minister for Foreign Affairs offered you a Colonial government, or a stipendiary magistracy in Canada or the West Indies?—and have you accepted it before reflecting how painful it may sometimes prove to a man to be compelled to leave his country for an indefinite period?" demanded the old merchant sarcastically.

"Dear me, no, Mr. Lyle! Nothing of the kind. I was not alluding to myself;" exclaimed Lancaster, whose complexion changed so unpleasantly at the mere contemplation of such a catastrophe, that his face assumed the appearance of one large bruise; "the Ministers would never, I flatter myself, recognize my long and zealous services by asking me to make a sacrifice of that serious

nature. Leave England! No, indeed; I would not leave England to be appointed Governor-General of India."

"And yet some men consent to exile themselves for much less," said the Anglo-Mexican.

"No doubt, no doubt, when they have no alternative, poor devils; but I flatter myself—"

"That you are not one of the poor devils who are driven to seek for a chance of existence in foreign lands; hey, Mr. Lancaster?" interposed the lawyer.

"I should think not, Sir; I should think not;" said the visitor, in a voice which came raspingly from between his partially-clenched teeth; "after a life devoted to the public service, it would be hard indeed if I were! No; but my immunity from such a fate does not render me callous to

the trials of others. Not, indeed, that there can be any comparison between the two cases; for I am inclined to believe that emigration is at times desirable—most desirable—for those who possess neither money nor influence at home.”

“There can be no doubt of it, Mr. Lancaster,” acquiesced the host quietly.

“Ah! you agree with me, Sir; I felt assured that you would. The fact is, Mr. Lyle, that we are over-populated in England. Our little island has become plethoric, and needs blood-letting; and there is a fine prospect in our new settlements for the young and adventurous.”

“A very fine one!” said Brunton bitterly; “there are plenty of forests to clear, roads to make, mines to work, and natives to slaughter. What can a man—especially a

man of education and refinement—require more?”

The government clerk was evidently chafed; but he did not lose his saturnine composure.

“Poverty has no law, Mr. Brunton;” was his retort; “and when an individual has to earn his bread, he must bring his health, and strength, and energy to the task, and lay by his education and refinement, until he can afford to indulge in such luxuries. Do you not agree with me in this also, Mr. Lyle?”

“Perfectly.”

“I was sure that you would. This is not an age of romance, but of action; it is worse than idle to suppose that because a man has had opportunities afforded to him of cultivating his intellect, he can work his

way through the world in a pair of kid gloves. The times are in a progression-state, and we must go with the times."

"And you are going—where? if I may venture the inquiry, in accordance with this very unquestionable theory?" asked Brunton.

"I, Sir? Nowhere," was the testy reply. "I have already explained that the business in hand involves no personal interests of my own. But perhaps," he added, glancing uneasily from the lawyer to his kinsman; "my presence at this moment is inconvenient, Mr. Lyle; and if so, I can postpone what I had to say until you are alone and disengaged."

"By no means, my good Sir; by no means;" said the Anglo-Mexican, with one of his blindest smiles; "my friend here and

myself have said all that we had to say in the way of business, and were merely gossiping away an idle hour; and whatever be the subject upon which you desire to consult me, you need not hesitate to explain it before him, as there are no secrets between us; and I have been accustomed for years—if you will allow me to make use of an Oriental figure of speech—to lay my heart in his hand, that he may read it.”

“Well, Mr. Lyle, you know best; but the discussion of family affairs is sometimes tedious to an uninterested person.”

“Perhaps so; but Brunton cannot be so considered; and his hearing the affair, whatever it may be, from your own lips, will simply save me the exertion of repeating it to him afterwards.”

The public official was evidently discon-

certed. The presence of the shrewd and astute lawyer was peculiarly unpalatable to him ; but there was no escape.

“ In that case,” he said ungraciously ; “ the matter had better be got over at once. I am here, Mr. Lyle, to solicit your assistance for our unfortunate young relative, Octavius.”

“ Your errand does you honour, nephew. What has happened to the lad ?”

“ That which is happening every day to scores of young men in his position. He cannot succeed in procuring any respectable occupation, and has no means of existence.”

“ Impossible ! What, in London, where there is such a field for energy and talent ?”

“ Impossible as it may appear to you,

my dear Sir, it is a fact. As I before remarked, we are overstocked in this country with energy and talent, and have no means of utilising them. No young fellow now-a-days, unless he can command the most overwhelming interest, or is enabled, through the influence of his family, to make head against the difficulties by which he is sure to be beset at the commencement of his career, has a chance of success in any profession. It is a cruel struggle, Mr. Lyle—a very cruel struggle—and one from which every honest and feeling man would be glad to release a fellow-creature, if it were in his power.”

“No doubt of it. But I do not see how this painful fact can affect Mr. Octavius Lyle.”

“You do not see it, Sir; you do not

see it!" exclaimed the visitor impatiently; "have I not already stated that this is precisely his position?"

"Surely not!" said the merchant. "How, indeed, can he be involved in the same fate as the unfortunate and friendless individuals to whom you have alluded, possessing as he does both powerful and wealthy connections? Such destitution as you describe can be experienced only by those who are alone in the world."

"He has no claim upon any of his relations," said Joseph Lancaster coldly.

The old merchant half rose from his seat; but before he could give vent to his indignation, he was involuntarily arrested by a peculiar expression in the eye of the lawyer.

"You are right, Sir; perfectly right;" remarked the latter; "and once more it

will, I am sure, afford you satisfaction to know that Mr. Lyle is precisely of your opinion."

"Yes;" said the Anglo-Mexican, who instantly remembered that he had made the same assertion during his previous argument with Brunton; "I *do* certainly agree with you, that the lad has no legal claim to the good offices of his kindred; but surely, in so extreme a case, no one would refuse to lend him a helping hand. You yourself, for instance, nephew, with your interest and influence—you could, I should imagine, have easily obtained for him a stool in your own office."

"No doubt I might; there can be, there is no doubt of it;" was the sententious reply; "but, Mr. Lyle, I am a prudent man; and I have every right to anticipate that before I die, I may, through the exertions of some

powerful friends, obtain an appointment alike more lucrative and more honourable than the one that I now hold; whereas, Sir, if I fritter away the influence to which you allude in the service of others, it will fail me when I require it in my turn."

"And yet, if I recollect right, you volunteered to exert this valuable interest in my behalf," remarked the host.

"That was a different thing;" said Mr. Lancaster, with a courteous inclination of the head.

"A very different thing altogether;" echoed the lawyer; "a totally different thing, my good Sir; this advocacy of *your* views or wishes, to whatever point they might tend, could not have endangered the interests of our friend here."

"Certainly not," acquiesced the visitor.

"In serving Mr. Reginald Lyle, my patrons would have served themselves."

"How so?" asked the merchant.

"My dear Sir," said Brunton, with a bow the very counterpart of that which had just been performed by the gentleman under government, "the influential personages to whom Mr. Lancaster alludes have the power which you need to aggrandize you; and you have the money which they require to enrich them. In your case, it would have been but a mere reciprocity of compliments."

"I see;" said the host composedly; "and, moreover, understand. The system is an admirable one; it helps those to commit folly, who are content to exchange the real and the tangible for the imaginary and the puerile, and leaves those to starve, who have

only a good name and a clear conscience to offer, in requital of an existence. Such as desire to think highly of their friends should ask nothing of them which, while conducing to their own personal gratification, will subject the said friends to any sacrifice of either vanity, comfort, or convenience; for many, by too closely assaying their gold, have found it fearfully impregnated with dross. I beg your pardon, nephew, for my obtuseness; and admit, without reservation, that you are, as you stated, a prudent man. Well then, to resume our survey of the lad's position; you can afford him neither money nor patronage, yet still you are anxious to serve him. How do you purpose to do this?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Lyle;" said Joseph Lancaster stiffly; "it is because I

have offered him pecuniary assistance—more, indeed, than I can afford—that is, more than perhaps, under the circumstances, I was called upon to volunteer, that I desired this interview with you. The poor boy desires, as it is very natural that he should do, to escape from all the mortifications and hardships with which he is beset here, by emigrating to Australia.”

“Ha! he wishes to go, does he?” asked the merchant doubtfully.

“Certainly;” was the decided reply; “it would, indeed, be extraordinary, in his position, if it were not so. He has discussed the matter with me; and the great difficulty, as you will readily understand, was a want of the necessary funds for so expensive an undertaking. Now I confess that I am not in the habit of giving away money; in fact, it is contrary to my prin-

ciples ; I consider it a mere weakness, unworthy of a man of sense and order ; but this was, as you justly remarked a few minutes ago, an extreme case ; the lad was a relation ; a fine lad too, on the whole, *that* I admit ; and I was proud of him, and anxious to see him do well in the world ; and so, when he had explained his dilemma, I promised, as I before told you, to give him a hundred pounds to carry out his views."

"On condition that he sailed in the next ship, I believe," said Brunton with emphasis.

"Just so ;" and a smile of defiance gleamed for an instant on the face of the visitor, as he fixed his cold glassy eyes upon the lawyer with the glance of a serpent, bright, keen, and venomous ; "I knew by experience the danger of exposing a youth who had never been accustomed to the management of money, to the temptations of London, with

so large a sum at his command ; and therefore I made the condition to which you allude."

"It was admirably imagined," said Reginald Lyle ; "and precisely what, from my observation of your character, I should have anticipated. There was no good to be done by his going if he did not go at once. But how did this notion of emigrating come into your head?"

"I believe that when he was explaining his embarrassments, his daily-increasing embarrassments to me, and soliciting my advice—"

"Your assistance," emended Brunton.

"Well, Sir, be it so, if you prefer the term;" said the old bachelor testily ; "I merely sought to put the matter before Mr. Lyle in the most delicate manner possible ; but you shall have your way. When he

was soliciting my *assistance*—” and he pronounced the word with an emphasis that was almost vicious, “it is probable, indeed it is positive, that I did throw out a hint that he might be enabled to do better abroad.”

“May I ask, nephew, what description of assistance he requested from you?” inquired the merchant. “Am I to understand that a Lyle could be fallen so low in self-respect as to seek alms even from a relative?”

“Money, or money’s worth, Sir ; it comes to the same thing ;” said Joseph Lancaster impatiently, for his temper was giving way ; “but I really do not feel myself called upon to betray the exact nature of the young man’s application.”

“Very commendable delicacy on your part ;” observed the aggravating lawyer ;

"but I believe that in this instance you need have no scruples of the sort. It was, if I mistake not, to request of you to become one of his securities, in order that he might be enabled to obtain a rather eligible situation in one of our principal metropolitan banking-houses. Am I not correct in my surmise?"

"Yes, Sir, you are. And what then?"

"Nay, Mr. Lancaster, it is for you to inform us of the result."

"Well then, Sir, the result was that I refused."

"Ha! you refused;" said the merchant; "you must have had a powerful reason for declining to assist your cousin, when you could have done it at so small a sacrifice."

"I look at the matter in a totally different

light, Mr. Lyle. I have not been so fortunate in life as yourself; and I could ill afford to lose a thousand pounds."

"No man would willingly do so. But I was not aware that the antecedents of the lad had been such as to lead to any suspicion of his honour or honesty."

"I do not say that they have, but human nature is frail; and we are all the creatures of circumstance, surrounded by temptation. The young man has been steady enough heretofore, for aught that I know to the contrary; but it is easy to be prudent when you do not possess wherewithal to commit excess. In obtaining the situation in question, he would have had money at his command; and, who knows? he might have run wild like many other young fellows of his age about town, and forfeited his securities in order to save himself."

"True, very true; he *might*, indeed, have done so;" said the merchant.

"Certainly; and I did not feel myself called upon to run the risk."

"But, if I have rightly understood your meaning, you at least softened your refusal by suggesting that he should emigrate?"

"I did more, Sir; I promised, as you are aware, to make him a present of a hundred pounds in the event of his acting upon my suggestion."

"He is a fortunate young man; a very fortunate young man;" said Mr. Lyle.

"He was delighted of course; he could not fail to be so. And now, my good Sir; what is it that you would consult about with me?"

"I wished, in the first place, to ascertain that you approved of his design."

"I am obliged by the attention; but I

really do not see that I have a right to interfere in any way."

"You are as nearly related to him as myself, Mr. Lyle."

"True ; but remember that you volunteered your advice, which fact at once made a wide difference in our relative position as regards him. Moreover, you have known him from a boy ; he must have become to you an object of interest and affection ; while to me he is a perfect stranger ; and as to our relationship, that tie is merely accidental and adventitious, unless it be cemented by habit and regard."

"Still I did hope that you might be induced to assist him."

"In what way?"

"I will be candid, Sir ;" said the visitor ;
"it struck me that you would perhaps start him fair, without compelling him to leave

his country under weighty and crushing obligations to half-a-dozen different individuals. He is aware that his aunt can ill afford to make him such a present; and that his cousin Percival—

“Has a very expensive family,” broke in the lawyer.

“Precisely;” said Lancaster, doggedly; “while as regards myself, although I am, of course, perfectly able to render him what assistance I think proper, still I am not what the world calls a rich man. Now you, Mr. Lyle, are well known to be wealthy; and should you be inclined to take the matter into your own hands, it would, I am satisfied, be a great relief to the poor boy’s mind to feel that, whether he succeed or fail, the result of his undertaking would be of no importance to you.”

“A very delicate and praiseworthy precaution on your part;” observed the Anglo-Mexican, quietly; “and one for which he certainly ought to be grateful; for a tranquil mind is a great blessing; and no doubt, as you shrewdly observe, the consciousness that *I* was his only creditor, and that in case of failure, it was *my* money that he had sacrificed, must have been a decided relief to him.—The idea is not a bad one, is it, Brunton? Only, you see, I have no particular desire that the lad should leave England. In fact, I have no feeling whatever upon the subject; and consequently, until he makes the request himself, I think that it would be indecent in me to put a bank-bill into his hand, and tell him to go and seek a home among strangers. If he *will* go, why of course he must; but I would not have it upon my

conscience to urge such a measure upon him; nor do I comprehend that I am called upon to do this, when, in so far as I am concerned, his departure can answer no purpose whatever."

"Then you decline to assist him, Mr. Lyle?"

"Most certainly I do; for I conceive that all interference on my part would not only be indelicate towards Octavius personally, but also ungenerous towards the affectionate relatives who have evinced so much sympathy in his sufferings. What right have I, who was utterly unknown to all my family only a few weeks back, arrogantly to step in with my gold between them and the good which they are anxious to accomplish? No, nephew Lancaster, I trust that I know myself better. I am grateful for all the disinterested warmth and kindness

in which I have been received by my
various relations, but I have no intention to
assume upon it."

"Surely, Mr. Lyle, in such a case as
this no one has a right to criticise your
conduct. You are a free agent."

"I know it, my good Sir; and that
privilege, at least, I am resolved to exercise.

I shall leave the affair which we have
been discussing entirely in your own hands,
and in those of your cousin."

"As you please; you have a right to
decide in the matter precisely as you consider
best. Then you have no objection to the
career which the young man is about to
adopt?"

"None in the world; not the slightest,
if he desires to profit by your advice; but I
was an exile myself for the better portion
of a long life, and I know too well the

pains and penalties attached to such an existence, to venture upon lightly exposing any fellow-creature to the same trials, and regrets, and heart-burnings; but if the young fellow in question is bent upon tempting his fortune abroad, I shall assuredly place no impediment in his way. I would have him reflect well and seriously, however, before he comes to such a decision; for although it is easy to talk of emigration here, in our arm-chairs, in a well-heated room, and surrounded by all the ease and comfort of a civilized home, its realities are enough to appal the stoutest heart; and woe be to those who either recklessly or selfishly wrench assunder the ties of kindred and of kindness, and thrust from them the blessings of country and of friendship, for the mere indulgence of an idle whim; while as to urging such a

pose upon the young and inexperienced, would sooner—but pshaw! every man has a right to think and feel as he sees; but he is not privileged to force either his opinions or his feelings upon others.”

“The young are always sanguine,” said the government official.

“Ay;” observed Brunton; “sanguine youth, and selfish in age; such is the epitome of human nature; and, for my part, I confess that I have more sympathy with the failing of our early existence than with the vice by which it is succeeded.”

“Both are bad,” said the visitor sententially.

“I admit it, when carried to excess;” replied Mr. Lyle; “and it is only then that we recognise them as such; although they exist, I am thankful to say, under

the modified names of hope and prudence even in this sadly misused world of ours; and what can be more beautiful than hope? what more admirable than prudence?"

Mr. Lancaster rose to depart; passed his hand through his bristly hair; and clutched his cane as though his fingers had been jointed with iron. "I have intruded long enough;" he said drily; "but you will excuse me, Mr. Lyle; my motive was a good one."

"It speaks for itself; it cannot possibly be misinterpreted;" smiled his host with the most courteous politeness; "and like all good deeds, will bring its own reward. I am glad to have seen you, nephew; and am grateful for the confidence with which you have honoured me. Good-day to you."

“Well, my friend”—asked the lawyer, while the government official was resuming his great coat, his goloshes, and his sable-boas in the hall; “what think you now of the sapient Mr. Joseph Lancaster?”

“That he is a humbug,” was the sullen response, as the Anglo-Mexican sank back with a sigh of relief upon his well-padded chair.

CHAPTER X.

TWO MOTHERS.

GREAT were the gratification and delight of Miss Penelope Lyle, when she learnt from the lips of Mr. Brunton (for the warm-hearted lawyer would not entrust to a third person the pleasant task of imparting to her the munificent intentions of his client) that she was about to become so large a recipient of her step-brother's bounty.

"It is not the money, my dear Sir ; it really is not the money ;" she said, as she

wiped away her fast-falling tears ; “ although I do not attempt to deny that so handsome an addition to my income will be most acceptable ; it is the kindness, the affection of the gift that overcomes me. I am sure I never dreamt of such a thing ; and that I should be the first upon whom Mr. Lyle confers so great a service ! Had it been one of my nephews, I could have understood it, for no doubt the old gentleman must be proud of them when he sees the figure that they make in the world ; but I am so differently situated—a plain, elderly woman, who can add nothing to his consequence in any way. It is really quite extraordinary ! ”

“ By no means ; my dear Madam ; ” said Brunton, affected in his turn by the simplicity of the artless spinster ; “ you must surely have remarked that even on the

occasion of your first meeting at his house, my client treated you with the most distinguished regard and respect."

"So he did, Sir; I am proud to say that he did indeed.—You remember, my dears;" she added, addressing the two sisters, who sat lost in astonishment at the marvellous tidings of the lawyer; "that I mentioned to you how politely Mr. Lyle desired me to do the honours of his tea-table, and how angry my two nieces appeared at the time, although of course they could not openly resent it; but still that was altogether a different affair; and I saw at once that it was merely a respect paid to my age; while this—but it is quite in vain for me to express what I feel, Mr. Brunton; and so I must beg of you to have the kindness to say all that is sincere and grateful for me to my generous brother."

"You may depend upon my doing so;" replied the lawyer; "and now, farewell for the present, my dear Miss Lyle. I know that it will afford my good friend very sincere gratification to learn that you so fully appreciate his liberality."

"I do indeed, Mr. Brunton; and I also feel your polite attention in taking the trouble to announce it to me yourself. I have worn out my youth, my dear Sir, but not my heart; for, with the exception of those made by my faithful friends now present, there have been few appeals to its sympathies."

"You have, however, nobly responded to such as *have* been made, Miss Lyle;" said the barrister warmly; "you forget that Trevor tells me all his secrets."

Did Miss Pen blush, or was it only the

reflection of the winter sunset upon her faded cheeks ?

“ It really seems like a dream ;” said Miss Hallingford, as, forgetful of their usual decorum, the three ladies stood at a window watching the departure of their visitor. “ Why, my dear Penelope, who could have expected such an event as this !”

“ Who indeed !” echoed her sister.

“ It is certain that I did not ;” was the meek rejoinder : “ perhaps I might anticipate that, in the event of his death, Reginald would remember me ; but that he should act as he has done, never for an instant entered into my imagination. But do you not think, my dears, that I ought to write and express my thanks to Mr. Lyle ? I know, of course, that Mr. Brunton will do it much better than I can ; but still it

strikes me that it will only be a proper mark of respect on my part to say the thing in my own way."

"I quite agree with you;" replied Miss Hallingford; "and if you will take my advice, you will do it at once. Clarissa, give me the blotting-book, with the gilt-edged letter-paper, and the pen and ink. Now, do try and compose yourself, my dear Penelope; here are your spectacles, and we will be as mute as mice until you have finished."

The voluntary promise was fulfilled; and ultimately, having cleared her throat, Miss Lyle read aloud the following epistle to her admiring friends:

"My dear Sir (and Brother),

"I have had many difficult tasks to perform in the course of my (tolerably long) life, but that of expressing to you what I

feel at your munificent generosity, is the most difficult of all. When I remember the superior advantages of your other relations, I can scarcely understand how you can have made me the first object of your liberality ; but it is less for the money that I now sit down to thank you (much as it will help to brighten my last years) than for the kindness and regard which you have shown to the most insignificant member of your family. ' I will try to deserve this preference by making a worthy use of your generosity ; and am happy to have the opportunity (as I trust you will believe) of transcribing myself,

“ My dear Sir (and Brother),

“ Your respectful and grateful servant,

(and sister)

“ PENELOPE LYLE.”

“Nothing could be better !” exclaimed the two spinsters simultaneously ; “Mr. Lyle cannot fail to be pleased with such a letter ; and now Martha shall run with it to the post, and we will draw round the fire, and settle ourselves for the evening.”

“I am afraid that you will think Wood-End very dull and humble now,” said the younger sister timidly.

“Clarissa !” exclaimed Miss Pen, in an accent of reproach ; and in the next instant her arms were about the neck of her friend, and they were weeping together as though some very heavy disaster had befallen them.

“Come, come ;” said Miss Hallingford with assumed cheerfulness ; “we are all too old to be sentimental, and this is a poor way of welcoming good fortune. Such a waste of time too, when we have so much more to talk over ; not to mention

that we are standing in a draught, and that the fire is getting low. Put on some coals, Clarissa; and you, Penelope, sit down and wipe your eyes, and look your prosperity in the face boldly. It must be a great comfort to you, my dear, that your worth has been appreciated; and not overlooked, as it might have been, in the splendour of your fashionable relations."

"And so it is, Agnes. You are quite right. You know I never coveted riches; but still it is very pleasant to have such a feeling of future independence."

"No doubt of it. We are all mortal; and without envying the good fortune of others, we may well be excused for rejoicing in our own."

"All I trust is," said the punctilious old lady, as a sudden shadow passed over her countenance; "that this great kindness on

the part of my brother will not offend his other connections. I should be so very sorry to be the cause of any ill-feeling ; and perhaps, you know, they may consider Mr. Lyle's generosity as a wrong done to themselves. How strange it is, my dears, that every good in this life brings its own anxieties with it. I suppose it is intended to teach us not to exult too much in our prosperity, and to bring us back to a more sober and becoming frame of mind."

"No doubt, Penelope, no doubt;" replied the gentle Miss Hallingford; "and it is well that we should regard every drawback in that light; yet still I confess that on this occasion I cannot but consider your apprehension to be somewhat morbid. If Mr. Lyle had given you *all* his property, then indeed I could understand that the other members of his family might feel

sore, and even consider themselves aggrieved, although in point of fact your brother has an undoubted right to dispose of his fortune as he thinks proper ; but after all, my dear, you must remember that, noble as his gift to you has been, it forms but a very small portion of his actual wealth ; and that you do not know how he may bestow the remainder."

"Very true ;" acquiesced Miss Penelope, in a more cheerful accent ; "there is still, as you say, enough and to spare ; and I have, in fact, no excuse for so uncharitable a suspicion. So now let us turn again to the bright side of the picture ; though, to tell the truth, my heart is so full, and I am still in such a state of astonishment, that I feel as though I could scarcely talk rationally upon the subject."

The door was closed ; the fire mended,

and for a few minutes the three ladies sat round the hearth in silence, each lost in her own reflections ; but this state of things could not last long ; and accordingly the conversation was soon resumed by Miss Penelope herself.

“What do you suppose I was thinking about, Agnes?” she asked.

“Nay, my dear, I am no conjuror.”

“Why, about those velvet dresses that we cheapened, and could not afford to buy. We can have them now.”

“But, my dear Penelope, I must not allow you to forget—”

“Nonsense. I know what you are going to say ; and instead of listening to it, I tell you that Clarissa and I will have a fly to-morrow, and go to town to purchase them. Should you, and ought you to believe that we can ever again have a divided in-

terest, after the sacrifice that you have volunteered to make for my poor Octavius?—And, by-the-bye, talking of flies, what do you say, my dears, to a Brougham? a plain, dark Brougham? It would be so respectable; and I really see nothing else that we require to make us thoroughly comfortable.”

Modest, but pleasant, was the picture presented by that simple and happy party as they thus savoured a foretaste of the coming good. Repine not, Reginald Lyle; the work which you have in hand is worthily commenced. As the hours flew by, your long-hoarded gold already scattered blessings under many an humble roof; there were pensioners to endow with a double benefaction; patients among the neighbouring poor to be nursed and nourished; idle children to be sent to school; and aged cripples to be housed and cared-for. It is

true that self had first figured in the dream. When is it not so? But better and holier purposes succeeded; and well is it for those who can so promptly disengage themselves from the sordid spell.

This, however, was not the only good effect produced by the merchant's liberality, for by some strange and occult magic it drew more closely together the ties of family affection and confidence. We have already shown that the fashionable wife of Mr. Percival Lyle, and the stately Mrs. Stainton merely tolerated each other in order to keep up appearances. The connexion had been, in fact, odious to both parties; as it always is where there is a desire to patronise on one side, and a resolution not to be patronised on the other. But the news of Miss Penelope's good fortune at once reconciled all differences;

each of the ladies felt herself aggrieved ; and remembering the old adage that Union is Force, they at once resolved to make common cause. As may be readily anticipated, it was Mrs. Percival who took the initiative.

“ You have ordered the carriage early ;” remarked her husband, whose temper had been considerably soured by the unwelcome intelligence of what he was pleased to call Mr. Lyle’s absurdity ; “ woman-like, nothing can check your love of pleasure. I verily believe that if you were to hear that the house had broke, you would not remain at home for a single day,”

“ I am obliged to you for your good opinion ;” said the lady, arranging more becomingly the curls which clustered beneath her bonnet ; “ and if you are anxious

to know where I am going, I am quite ready to satisfy your curiosity. I am about to pay a visit to Mrs. Stainton."

"For what purpose?"

"You are dull to-day, my dear. Do you not think it is quite time that the different members of your family should come to an understanding, before that odious old maid undermines us altogether? For my part I will not be guilty of the weakness of sitting idly with my hands in my lap, and seeing my children wronged, when by a little good management I may perhaps succeed in preventing their being made the victims of a contemptible intrigue."

"There is some sense in that."

"I am glad you think so; and it strikes me that you would do better if you were, in your turn, to call upon your cousin Lancaster, and hear what he has to say upon the subject,

than to remain quietly by the fireside, moaning over an evil which you should be endeavouring to repair."

"How *can* it be repaired? Everything was concluded before I heard a word of the matter."

"But is it possible you do not see that this can be only the beginning of worse? Really, Mr. Percival, you are a perfect child on occasions of this sort! Let this horrible old woman once gain an ascendancy over the mind of your uncle, and good bye to all your prospects."

"And how am I to prevent it?"

"In a hundred ways. It is of no use to discuss the matter in your present temper, but the thing must be done, and done at once, before her professions of gratitude, and her fulsome flatteries, cajole the old man into receiving her into his house; for I see clearly

that, if we do not in some way contrive to weaken her hold upon him, she will prove a dangerous enemy. She never liked us, you well know; and I am quite sure that she never will. How, indeed, was it likely that she should, moving in so different a sphere of society? And to reflect that so insignificant a person as Miss Lyle should stand in the way of my girls is enough to drive one insane. But I will not sit tamely by, and suffer such an injustice—upon that, at least, I am resolved.”

“ Well, do as you please.”

“ I intend it; and without loss of time moreover. There is nothing so weak and maudlin as procrastination when every hour may bring its own danger, and I see clearly enough, that if *I* do not move in this affair, *you* will not. You can be energetic when the fate of a cargo, or even the payment of a

few household bills, is concerned ; and yet now, when thousands and tens of thousands are dependent upon a little exertion, you are as helpless as an infant."

"And pray, Mrs. Percival, how do you expect to influence their disposal?"

"By asserting myself, like a woman of sense, who has the interest of her family at heart. As a matter of course, Mrs. Stainton must be as indignant as myself, for if I have two daughters to think of, she, on her side, has two sons ; and it would be monstrous to suppose that she does not resent such an injustice. No mother could command her feelings on an occasion like this. To her, indeed, with those odious, half-witted young men to push forward in the world, the question is a vital one. Our girls will marry as a natural consequence, carefully educated as they have been ; and therefore her risk and responsi-

bility are still greater than our own; for, to speak the truth, I look upon Anastasia to be as good as married already to Mr. Forester, and I do not see that she could do better."

"Nor I either," said the merchant drily.

"But what Mrs. Stainton *can* hope to make of those boys, *I* really can't conceive;" continued the lady emphatically. "Poor thing! I want words to express what I feel for her."

"No doubt you do—" muttered Mr. Percival.

"Well, I shall very frankly tell her my view of the case;" pursued his wife volubly; "and if she refuses to see it as I do, she must take the consequences. I am, moreover, bent upon inducing her to make the first move in the business, in order that in

the event of your uncle thinking proper to take offence at the interference of the family, his displeasure may not fall upon us."

"Quite right," said the merchant approvingly.

"Ha!" replied the lady, drawing a deep breath; "it is well for men that their wives are occasionally more quick-witted than themselves; and from the resentment which Mr. Lyle evidently feels against Octavius for a much less matter, it is clear to me that should I succeed in making Mrs. Stainton the spokeswoman on this occasion, we are very likely to kill two birds with one stone. But here is the carriage; and perhaps during my absence you will reflect on what I have said."

"Reflect, indeed;" muttered the merchant, as his wife disappeared; "a pleasant subject

for reflection truly. I foresee how it will be ; the noble fortune that would have saved my credit, and secured the honour of the family name, if it had been given, or even bequeathed in bulk as it should have been, to one who knew how to use it, will be frittered away among half-a-dozen individuals ; and all to satisfy the paltry vanity of a doting old man, who is anxious to be looked upon as the general benefactor of his family. However, her idea is sensible enough. I will see Lancaster. He is a long-headed fellow ; and we may strike out something between us."

Merrily sped on the well-appointed chariot, through crowded streets alive with the buzz and bustle of human life ; over the noble bridge spanning the still more noble river ; and along the pleasant highway, where the weary monotony of bricks and mortar was

relieved by occasional groups of stately trees, which although leafless at that season, arrested the eye as it fell upon the delicate tracery of their slender branches gracefully pencilled against the cold clear sky ; by clusters of evergreen shrubs ; by occasional glimpses of green fields ; and by trim gardens, and well-kept lawns.

But the sole occupant of the luxurious equipage saw none of these things, as she sat enveloped in her fur wrappings, in a corner of the vehicle, absorbed in her own thoughts. Even her vanity slumbered. She forgot to wonder what effect her amiable condescension, and her Parisian bonnet, would produce upon the lady whom she was about to visit ; she neither re-arranged her curls, nor smoothed her flounces ; she was, indeed, to use her own expression, “ perfectly unhinged.” Not nervous ; no—Mrs. Percival

Lyle scorned a weakness of that description ; but excited, angered, and indignant ; as people sometimes are at occurrences with which they have no possible right to intermeddle ; for she was by no means inclined to concur in the opinion of the noble individual who declared that “every man had a right to do as he pleased with his own.” She had more extended and philanthropic views ; and she considered that Mr. Reginald Lyle, by disposing of his property according to his inclination, was guilty of an atrocious wrong towards those who had looked upon it as their undoubted and rightful inheritance.

Was she singular in taking this view of the case ? We are afraid not.

The visit of Mrs. Percival did not create the surprise which she had anticipated. Rare as were her apparitions at Minerva Lodge, it was evident, even to *her* pre-

occupied mind, that her appearance there on this occasion elicited neither curiosity nor speculation ; neither had she, previously to the appearance of the lady-principal, her accustomed opportunity of investigating all the details of the drawing-room arrangements, and ascertaining how many new ornaments had been added to the decoration of the tables and consoles by the “ young friends ” of Mrs. Stainton since her last visit ; for as she traversed the hall, she heard her name announced ; and found herself, when she had crossed the threshold of the apartment, in the presence of her hostess.

“ Welcome, my dear Mrs. Lyle, welcome ; ” said the mistress of the house, as her visitor entered the room. “ Do you know that I quite anticipated this visit. I felt sure that you would resent as deeply as I do the unworthy conduct of that hypocritical Miss

Lyle, whom I suspected of some plot of this kind the day that we dined in Hertford Street."

"Yes; is it not abominable?" asked Mrs. Percival with an expression of the most virtuous indignation. "Pretty taste the old nabob has shown, upon my word, to throw away his money upon that frightful scarecrow of a woman, when he might have benefited our dear children, and secured their position in society; but, as you justly remark, there can be no doubt that the train was laid beforehand; and I am greatly deceived if that disagreeable Mr. Brunton was not at the bottom of it. I always detested that man, with his quiet sneers, and his plausible speeches. I am obliged to tolerate him, because he is the old Mexican's man of business, and possesses great influence over him; otherwise, I can assure you that

he should never set his foot in *my* house; and Mr. Percival likes him as little as I do."

"I am not at all surprised to hear you say so;" sententiously remarked Mrs. Stainton; "Mr. Brunton may be a very clever man of business, but he is by no means agreeable in society. My son Frederic, who is an admirable judge of manner, was really quite shocked at his abruptness and want of refinement, when we were brought into contact with him at Mr. Lyle's."

The lip of the visitor curled almost imperceptibly, but she was far too politic to give utterance to the feeling which she could not altogether suppress; and she continued eagerly;

"I am quite sure that he might have prevented this nonsensical business if he had thought proper to do so; but I can easily be-

lieve that he took a malicious pleasure in encouraging the old simpleton in his folly. And now, what is to be done? You can never suffer two fine young men like Ernest and Frederic—mind, I speak sincerely, and without the slightest intention to flatter you—who require only a tolerable fortune to make a figure in the world, to be robbed in this shameful manner, without expostulating with the old tyrant. I am quite sure that I would not, were I similarly situated.”

“And you are right, Mrs. Percival; it is not to be thought of. We are both extremely ill-treated, and we have every reason to feel aggrieved. Look at your dear girls—I confess to you that I was perfectly astonished at the refinement and elegance of their manners the other day; you may well be proud of them; and is it not cruel that they should

be defrauded in this way? It is very easy to say that Mr. Lyle is in his dotage, but he must have had very dangerous advisers."

"I should not care for myself;" said the visitor, tossing back her redundant curls; "nor for Mr. Percival, who is, as everybody knows, making a great deal of money. But of course I am anxious about my daughters; for, were they to marry early, my husband would be compelled to withdraw a portion of his capital from the house, in order to pay their dowry; and I confess that after having brought so fine a fortune into the family myself, I should not like to see the girls less amply provided for."

"Fortunately they are still very young;" observed Mrs. Stainton, consolingly; "and in all probability you will not be deprived of their society for a year or two yet."

“As regards Anastasia you are in error ;” said Mrs. Percival, with a pretty affectation of confidence ; “and I really do not see, considering our near relationship, why I should hesitate to tell you that there is an immediate prospect of the dear girl making a most desirable marriage. The young man who is now paying his addresses to her, has lately come into possession of a splendid property ; and had Mr. Lyle done his duty by his nephew and namesake, as we had every right to expect that he would do, there could not have been the slightest difficulty in the way. As it is, however, poor Mr. Percival will of course be compelled to make a great sacrifice.”

“Thoroughly can I sympathise with you, my dear Madam ;” sighed Mrs. Stainton, who at once detected the feeling of triumph with which her voluble guest had commu-

nicated this interesting fragment of domestic history; "for I am precisely in the same position as yourself. My darling Frederic is affianced to an heiress, who dotes upon him, but whose father is unwilling to consent to the union of the two dear children, until the poor boy has either obtained church-preferment or is able to make some settlement upon his wife. I mentioned to him our expectations from Mr. Lyle, as you may imagine, trusting to remove his objection; but the old gentleman is for the present impracticable; and I need not therefore explain the feeling of indignation with which I learnt the weak and inconsiderate manner—to use no stronger term—in which our wealthy relative is wasting his money. I really should have imagined from what I have seen of him, that he would have had more pride (for it is certain that he fully

appreciates both luxury and high-breeding) than to throw away so serious a sum upon an obscure old maid, who can add nothing either to his comfort or his fashion. What strange events one sees in the world !”

“Strange indeed !” echoed Mrs. Percival ; “and many of them monstrously disagreeable. And so Frederic is about to marry an heiress ?” she continued, in an accent which betrayed a slight tinge of incredulity : “what then has become of the Lady Harriet to whom you alluded at Mr. Lyle’s ? I thought you spoke as though matters were concluded in *that* quarter.”

Mrs. Stainton was, for a single instant, at fault ; but only for an instant.

“And so they were ;” she said with admirable composure. “But to be candid with you, Mrs. Percival, I considered the whole affair to be so imprudent that I at last

succeeded in inducing the dear boy to give it up."

"But what said the lady's noble relations to that arrangement?" asked her shrewd companion, who was at no loss to perceive the embarrassment created by her curiosity; "your position was a very delicate one. Did they not resent such an affront?"

"Happily," was the cold reply; "the Earl has been dead some years, and the Countess has contracted a second marriage; and, accordingly, as is usual under such circumstances, her interest in the children of her first husband has considerably declined: in fact, Lady Harriet and her sister have for some time resided with a maiden-aunt, by whom they are so spoiled that she never interferes with them in any way."

"How extremely lucky! But it would appear, in that case, that the young lady was

willing, on her side, to break off the connection."

"By no means;" said Mrs. Stainton eagerly; "but when, by my advice, the dear boy (for he is such an admirable creature that he is always ready to defer to my opinion)—when, I say, he frankly and candidly explained to her that the want of fortune on both sides must necessarily subject her to privations and anxieties to which she was totally unaccustomed; and that I felt it my duty to represent to her, on my side, the expediency of submitting at once to what was inevitable, without betraying to uninterested persons how deeply her affections had been engaged; we induced her to listen more patiently, although it was a painful affair, I can assure you; for she still declared that she should not survive the separation; and that

she could, and would, rather submit to any poverty than resign him."

"Frederic must have been sorely tried by such an assurance!" said Mrs. Percival in an accent through which, in spite of herself, there pierced a slight shade of mockery.

"Poor boy! you may imagine how his heart was wrung as he listened;" replied her unmoved companion; "but he behaved nobly! Convinced that my view of the case was a correct one, he had even the moral strength to argue against his own cause; and I was ultimately compelled to desire him to withdraw, and to leave me with her ladyship, which he had no sooner done than I appealed to her dignity of feeling."

"What a task for a mother, anxious for the happiness and worldly success of her

sons!" exclaimed the visitor, casting her eyes pathetically towards the ceiling; "and desirous at the same time not to wound the delicacy of a high-born and sensitive girl."

"Nevertheless, I did not shrink from what I considered as an imperative duty;" pursued Mrs. Stainton, resolved not to be worsted by her antagonist; "'My dear Lady Harriet,' I said resolutely; 'the whole existence of a woman is lost when she has once forgotten the modesty and reserve, which are the noblest and the most graceful attributes of her sex. She may be brilliant and seductive, but her intellect and her fascinations have lost their greatest charm. She may attract, but she cannot retain; she may dazzle, but she cannot enslave. A man may err, and the world forgives, and even courts the criminal; but

it has less mercy upon the woman whose name once becomes a subject of gossipry; she has no resting-place, no friend, no right of place in society. She must suffice to herself; and it is difficult to war against a world.' ”

“How very pretty!” lisped Mrs. Percival sarcastically; “why, I declare it was just what one reads in a novel. Such a charming specimen of maternal eloquence no doubt produced an astonishing effect.”


“It at least produced that which I intended;” was the stately reply; “for her ladyship reluctantly yielded to my arguments; and after a very painful scene they parted.”

“I trust that she will be able to console herself as easily as Frederic has done;” observed Mrs. Percival with a placid smile; “it is a pity, however, that there should

be so formidable a hitch in his next love-affair, but we will hope that it may be got over in time. The young lady is, I presume, an inmate of your establishment?"

"She is; and her fortune is her least recommendation. I had loved her like a daughter long before I suspected her attachment. Poor dear child! we little guessed the martyrdom that she underwent during Frederic's first engagement; but now that we are aware of it, it only serves, as you will readily understand, to endear her to us the more."

"Of course; of course;" said Mrs. Percival, annoyed on finding herself thus foiled with her own weapons; "but I sincerely hope, to revert for an instant to my own affairs, that Sydney Forester has had no previous attachment; for I confess to you that



I should be most anxious about Anastasia, did I consider such to be the case. I have always been an advocate for first-love ; and I declare to you, that as regards myself, I never even dreamt of any one until I gave my hand to Mr. Percival Lyle."

"A rare instance I should imagine;" sneered her companion ; "but did you not mention Mr. Sydney Forester as the suitor of your daughter? I really congratulate you ; he is a very fine young man."

"Was I really so incautious as to name him?" exclaimed the visitor with evident annoyance ; "I ought not to have done so. Not that I fear your discretion, my dear Mrs. Stainton : but until matters are definitively settled, it was really very imprudent. So you know Mr. Forester?"

"I have seen him several times. He is the cousin of one of my young friends."

“Indeed !”

“Yes ; and for once my perspicacity has been decidedly at fault ; for, to tell you the truth, I had fancied that there was more between him and the said Miss Bellingham than the mere conventional regard of relationship.”

“But you see that you must have been mistaken.”

“Who can say ? Mr. Bellingham may have objected to the match ; and Mr. Forester may have consoled himself as Frederic has done.”

“If I thought so—” commenced Mrs. Percival ; but she checked herself, for she was by no means prepared to confide to her companion the nature of the reflection which had so suddenly flashed across her mind.

“ Believe me ;” continued Mrs. Stainton, who was not slow to discover her advantage ; “ there are few things more Utopian than the dreams of first love to which you lately alluded ; we are no longer living in the Golden Age, and playing at shepherds and shepherdesses ; the world is about us, and clinging to us all, and we must submit to its restraints. I presume that you will have no objection to my communicating this shred of family news to poor little Emily Bellingham ?”

“ I beg your pardon ;” exclaimed Mrs. Percival, as the blood mounted to her brow, and burned there ; “ I have every possible objection in the world ; for, with such a suspicion on my mind, I shall certainly not permit the marriage. Indeed I believe that the most prudent step I can take will be to

forbid Mr. Forester the house. There is nothing like a radical remedy in affairs of this sort."

"Nay, nay ;" said Mrs. Stainton, as she pressed the hand of her visitor with a display of affection which was as unwelcome as it was insincere, for the astute lady comprehended at once that the contemplated marriage of the fair Anastasia was merely a pleasant fiction ; "beware of rushing into extremes. Mr. Forester is a singularly handsome and accomplished young man ; an admirable musician, as I know by experience, Mr. Bellingham having requested me to allow him to accompany Emily with his flute twice or three times a week ; as, although he admitted that she had a brilliant finger, and that her execution was splendid, he considered her to be deficient in time. Such being his expressed desire, I

could not, of course, raise any objection ; and accordingly I took my work into the drawing-room, and remained with the two cousins during his stay. He is, moreover, an excellent artist ; and altogether I doubt whether any girl, and particularly one who is only just entering the world, could receive his attentions with indifference. You must also remember, my dear Mrs. Percival, that you have *two* daughters to marry ; and that a young man of his talents and property is not to be met with every day ; while, really, with far less inducement than poor dear Anastasia must have had to return his affection, young people, at times, form such strong attachments that it is dangerous to thwart them ; and your sweet girls appear to me to be rather delicate."

"By no means ;" was the sharp retort ;
"they have excellent constitutions. You for-

get that they have always been under my own eye, and have never been subjected to the privations or hardships of a school. But I do not wish them to be made the theme of gossipry or comment. Mr. Percival Lyle's daughters must be spared such a degradation; as for Anastasia, I am under no apprehension whatever, for I feel satisfied that, educated as she has been at home, and under my personal guardianship, she knows too well what is due alike to herself and her parents, to be guilty of loving any man without their sanction. We will change the subject, however; for, as you are aware, it was a much more serious motive which brought me here."

"Very true. And what course do you intend to pursue?"

"That is precisely the question which I

was about to put to yourself; for to you, our present dilemma must be even more vexatious and important than to us. Girls who have fashion and family to recommend them are sure to go off, but with young men the case is altogether different; and although Frederic is, as you state, provided for, you have still your eldest son in a great degree upon your hands."

"No;" said Mrs. Stainton with a self-gratulatory smile; "Ernest has been as fortunate as his brother, or nearly so; for Miss Alicia Ravensdale, an only child and an heiress, another amiable young friend of mine, who has been adopted by an uncle, is greatly attached to him; and he returns her affection. So that you see, my dear Mrs. Percival, it would be imprudent in me, under such circumstances, to take the initia-

tive; as it would not do to set Mr. Lyle against the young people, just when they are starting in the world."

"Ah!" laughed the visitor gaily, although shade of bitterness was perceptible amid her mirth; "You have proved yourself what I always said you were; a very clever woman. And to think how snugly you have brought all this to bear under your own roof! Now I understand why you refused any longer to countenance that impertinent Octavius; and you did quite right. He must have been terribly in the way of your sons; for, after all, we must confess that he is very handsome and attractive."

"We cannot do otherwise;" said the mistress of the house, as blandly as she had before spoken; "and for that very reason I highly applauded your own pru-

dence when you refused to receive him ; as I am well aware that there is no accounting for the whims and caprices of young girls."

"Of those no one can, of course, dispute your perfect experience ;" said Mrs. Percival ; "but to revert to Octavius—I fear that the poor boy has offended his uncle past all redemption."

"So it would appear indeed. But with regard to that same uncle—for we have once more wandered from our subject—What is to be done?"

"I really cannot imagine. All I know is, that we must do something."

"And that something?"

"We must undermine that odious old maid. I hate old maids!" said the merchant's wife, with a pretty shudder.

"Most people do, they are such manœuvring, censorious creatures. Unfortunately,

I know so little of Miss Lyle that, with the best inclination in the world, I really do not see how I can move in the business. Had I ever received her at my house, or in any way courted her acquaintance, I should have made a point of waiting upon her, and very candidly expressing my opinion of her unworthy conduct; but as I have constantly avoided an intercourse which I could not consider to be either profitable or pleasant, I cannot now expose myself to probable insult by intruding my feelings upon her."

"Then you altogether decline to act in the matter?"

"I really cannot, on the spur of the moment, decide upon what I may ultimately deem it expedient to do. Many serious considerations are involved in the subject, and a false move may be fatal."

“Well, bear it in mind at all events;” said the visitor, rising to depart; “and should any thing strike you, either write, or call in Bedford Square; only remember that we must act in concert if we hope to succeed. Percival will see Joseph Lancaster; and it will be very hard if we do not manage to circumvent an ugly old woman. Consult with your sons, who will have no objection, I dare say, to a share of their uncle’s gold, particularly under present circumstances; and do not fail to tell them how sincerely I congratulate them on their happy prospects.”

“I will not, depend upon it. Poor dear boys! they richly deserve their good fortune; but I confess that I sometimes feel quite sad when I reflect, that I am no longer their first object of interest and affection.”

“No doubt, no doubt;” said Mrs. Percival, drawing on her gloves; “but you do not require to be told, my dear Madam, that we bring up our sons for themselves, and our daughters for other people; so that, as you see, you must be content to share the common lot of mothers.”

“I suppose so,” replied Mrs. Stainton in an accent of the most angelic resignation.

“And you will be kind enough not to betray Anastasia’s secret?”

“My *dear* Mrs. Percival!” said her friend deprecatingly; “you cannot for a moment believe me to be capable of so great an indiscretion; and perhaps in your turn, you will oblige me by not hinting at the prospects of my boys to Mr. Reginald Lyle; as it might, you know, tend

to—in short, you understand my meaning.”

“ Perfectly ;” and Mrs. Percival was for once sincere ; she thoroughly understood what she was expected to do, and as thoroughly resolved that it should not be done.

“ No ;” she murmured to herself when she was once more alone, and on her road homeward ; “ I know the old man’s vanity too well to volunteer such a communication. And to think that those two awkward, underbred, affected lads are about to marry heiresses ! Upon my honour, a lady’s school is no bad speculation for a widow with grown-up sons ; but, after all, I cannot help thinking that the whole affair is exceedingly disgraceful !”

CHAPTER XI.

TO-DAY.

WE have already chronicled the feeling of discouragement with which Octavius Lyle returned home after his interview with the ladies of Wood-End. His first sensation, on listening to the generous proposition of Miss Hallingford, had been one of deep gratitude and momentary hope ; but the temporary exaltation rapidly passed away. True, one of the desired securities was found, and thus half his task was accomplished ; yet

nothing was in reality achieved, for he knew not where to seek for a second. His circle of friends was so small—the necessitous are seldom overburthened with social resources—and he had failed on every side.

Still it was pleasant and soothing to know that there yet existed a few who felt for him, who compassionated his struggles, and who would fain have stretched out to him a helping hand. His heart swelled with emotion as he dwelt upon the frank and unaffected kindness of the worthy spinsters on whom he had no claim, while so many, towards whom he had looked with confidence and trust, had coldly “passed by on the other side.” The contrast affected him deeply, and gave an additional value to the proffered service; as we ever value the one star which gleams out of a murky sky the

more highly, when all its bright companions are shrouded in vapour.

But soon the stern reality rose up before him. It was in vain to contend against his destiny. He had now only to resign himself as manfully as he could to a fate which appeared to be inevitable; and with much such a sensation as a man may be supposed to feel, who seats himself at his desk, to take a last farewell of all that is dearest to him on earth, previous to engaging in that apogee of human folly, commonly called "an affair of honour," poor Octavius spread his writing materials before him, and with a rapidity which nothing but strong excitement could have supplied, poured out his whole soul—and truly it was the very outpouring of bitterness and disappointed love—to his loved, and, as he feared, lost Alice.

He told her all. He besought her to forgive him for forsaking her, it might be for years, it might be for ever. He implored her at one moment to forget him, and to bestow the affection, which had been to him as the very principle of existence, upon another and a happier man; and in the next, he enjoined her to think of him, to be true to him, to confide in his love, and to believe how he would toil, and strive, and suffer, without a murmur, so that he might win her at last.

Lovers are generally eloquent, but seldom logical, and Octavius was no exception to the rule. He wrote with the heart rather than with the head, but he full well knew that he should be understood; and he covered page after page with those glowing sentences and burning thoughts, at which the mature of years and of reason

are always prompt to smile, but which have ever been, and ever will be, dearer to the young and the loving, than the most abstruse efforts of human intellect. Thus much, however, was intelligible and coherent—that he could provide only one of the necessary securities; that every prospect of fortune was closed against him in England; and that he had no alternative, save to follow the advice of his friends, and emigrate.

How earnestly he sat and gazed at the letter when he had folded it! How he contemplated the “one loved name” upon the superscription! Should he ever again be called upon to write it? His eyes grew dim, and the familiar characters reeled and danced before him; but still in his heart-vision he read it legibly, and “Alice—Alice,” escaped unconsciously from his quivering lips. It cost him an effort to part

from his letter as the post-hour drew near ; for might it not be the last link between them, which was rent asunder as he relinquished it ?

Poor fellow ! It did not strike him how many more aching hearts and trembling hands had helped to build up the heap upon which it fell. He did not pause to moralize over the mysteries of a London letter-box ; and yet how fruitful a theme does it present for deep and earnest reflection ! Could a second Asmodeus, instead of laying bare the secrets of a household, reveal those of one of these daily receptacles of human struggle and human triumph, what an awful revelation would it be ! what a moral kaleidoscope would it present ! what dark domestic dramas, at which we never guessed, even in our wildest moments, should we discover to be enacting about us ! What glorious dreams of

intellect and genius—what sweet glimpses of innocence and love—what wild and frenzied conceptions—what subtleties, and treacheries, and crime, should we not find hidden beneath the folds of those monotonous-looking envelopes, so similar without, that you might shuffle them together like a pack of cards, and, in so far as their exterior was concerned, care little which came to the surface; and yet so fearfully, so unutterably different within, that the substitution of one for the other might change the whole tenor of an existence!

But to return from this long digression to Octavius. What was his astonishment to receive on the same evening a reply to his voluminous dispatch, addressed in the handwriting of Alice, but contained in so minute an envelope, that when it was delivered to him he grew sick and giddy? All was over

between them—it must be—his poverty had chilled her affection.

“Well;” he muttered to himself, as he flung down the letter unopened; “I shall depart with one regret the less. I shall leave little behind me to excite a sigh, when I find myself a stranger in a strange land. I will renounce even my name, and endeavour to forget all in *my* turn. Men *have* lived alone, unloved and unloving, for a lifetime; and it may perhaps be done again. But Alice—Alice—I had such faith in *her*, young as she is; I believed her to be so firm, so true-hearted. I would have staked my existence on her affection. My sweet, bright-eyed Alice! And we might have been so happy, had not the world come between us.”

And the unfortunate youth cast himself upon a chair, and wept.

What a boon are tears ! Aye, even when wrung from the strong heart of man, terrible as they may be to look upon, they bring a solace with them.

After a time Octavius roused himself, brushed away the moisture from his eyes, and slowly extended his hand towards the note which lay before him. How eagerly had he hitherto torn away the seal of every packet, which had been folded by the delicate fingers of his beloved ; and how reluctantly and sadly did he now draw the fairy sheet from its cover, and gaze upon the mere score of lines that it contained ! But not Hipparchus himself, when he discovered the previous existence of the lost Pleiad, exulted with a wilder joy than did Octavius Lyle, when his mind, as by a lightning flash, drank in the tenor of those dreaded lines.

“ Rejoice ! ” — (thus ran the brief but fateful

note:)—“ Rejoice, Octavius, as I do. My father was with me when your letter was put into my hands by our trusty Mary ; and I had no sooner read it to the end than I resolved to enlist him in your cause ; and so I told him all. And what do you think ? He consents to be your second surety, on condition that I do not trouble him (he hates trouble !) about our marriage for a year to come. So you had better settle about the bank, and then look out for a house, for the twelve months will soon come to an end. He has consented to post this, that you may get it at once ; and therefore I shall say no more now, than that I am, of course,

“ Your own

“ ALICE.”


“ P.S. 1.—I think I should like to live at Hampstead, if it is tolerably cheap.

“ P.S. 2.—You are to write to Mr.

Brunton, of Lincoln's Inn, and tell him Papa's determination."

Write ! aye, without the loss of a single second. How strange, how fortunate, that Brunton should be Mr. Ravensdale's man of business. For, after all, even although the lawyer had refused personally to assist him, he had nevertheless expressed a great interest in his success ; and would undoubtedly arrange the affair as speedily as possible.

With this delightful conviction Octavius seated himself at his desk, and as his pen flew rapidly over the paper a smile played about his lips. Fortune was about to favour him at last ! All his past misgivings, and sorrows, and struggles were to be more than compensated ! The note was soon completed ; and then the excited young man buried his face in his hands, and thought—



thought deeply and gratefully of the happy future which he could no longer doubt was opening before him, and of *her* who was to be its brightest blessing. Dear, constant Alice! how admirable and judicious had been her conduct! And in one little year she would be his! And Octavius, with a full heart and in a thankful spirit, dreamt such dreams of bliss as it would have required a millennium to realize.

He was aroused from his trance of happiness by the return of Trevor from his daily labour; and the affectionate greeting of his wife, which reached him through the half-open door of his apartment.

“And I too in a year,” he thought; “shall like him possess a home, and he welcomed by the voice of affection. We shall be poor, perhaps, for a time; but we shall care little for that. It is love which makes luxury, and thus we shall be rich; aye, richer than

the wealthiest, who have no heart ready to beat against their own ; no inner world in which to dwell, where no stranger can intrude ; no hopes, and joys, and blessings, to communicate and to exchange."

And then the happy and excited young man sprang down stairs to impart to his long-tried friends the blissful prospect which had so unexpectedly opened upon him, and to despatch to Mr. Brunton the message of Alice's father.

The congratulations of Mrs. Trevor were earnest and voluble, as with tears of joy coursing each other down her cheeks, she poured forth all her genuine delight at the intelligence ; but the felicitations of her husband were less demonstrative. He had never forgotten the ambiguous and inexplicable conduct of his employer when he encountered Mr. Ravensdale in the railway train ; and improbable as the thing appeared, (since

he could conceive no possible reason for such an antipathy), he still could not divest himself of the belief that, from some unexplained cause, Mr. Brunton was in fact the enemy of his young inmate.

It was therefore calmly, and almost coldly, that he listened for a while to the animated recital of Octavius, his joyous laughter, and his rapturous expressions of gratitude alike to Alice and to her parent; but there was no resisting the contagion of his frank-hearted delight for any length of time; and ere they parted for the night, the little parlour of that modest dwelling was glad with merriment, and filled with an atmosphere of love and hope.

And then the morrow came.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed by Schulze and Co., 13, Poland Street.

CHEAP EDITION OF THE LIVES OF THE QUEENS.

*Now in course of Publication, in Eight Monthly Volumes, post octavo
(comprising from 600 to 700 pages each), commencing the 1st January, 1854,
Price only 7s. 6d. per Volume, elegantly bound,*

LIVES
OF THE
QUEENS OF ENGLAND.
BY AGNES STRICKLAND.

EMBELLISHED WITH PORTRAITS OF EVERY QUEEN.

BEAUTIFULLY ENGRAVED FROM THE MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES.

IN announcing a cheap Edition of this important and interesting work, which has been considered unique in biographical literature, the publishers again beg to direct attention to the following extract from the author's preface:—"A revised edition of the 'Lives of the Queens of England,' embodying the important collections which have been brought to light since the appearance of earlier impressions, is now offered to the world, embellished with Portraits of every Queen, from authentic and properly verified sources. The series, commencing with the consort of William the Conqueror, occupies that most interesting and important period of our national chronology, from the death of the last monarch of the Anglo-Saxon line, Edward the Confessor, to the demise of the last sovereign of the royal house of Stuart, Queen Anne, and comprises therein thirty queens who have worn the crown-matrimonial, and four the regal diadem of this realm. We have related the parentage of every queen, described her education, traced the influence of family connexions and national habits on her conduct, both public and private, and given a concise outline of the domestic, as well as the general history of her times, and its effects on her character, and we have done so with singleness of heart, unbiassed by selfish interests or narrow views. Such as they were in life we have endeavoured to portray them, both in good and ill, without regard to any other considerations than the development of the *facts*. Their sayings, their doings, their manners, their costume, will be found faithfully chronicled in this work, which also includes the most interesting of their letters. The hope that the 'Lives of the Queens of England' might be regarded as a national work, honourable to the female character, and generally useful to society, has encouraged us to the completion of the task."

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

ON THE LIVES OF THE QUERNS.

FROM THE TIMES.

"These volumes have the fascination of romance united to the integrity of history. The work is written by a lady of considerable learning, indefatigable industry, and careful judgment. All these qualifications for a biographer and an historian she has brought to bear upon the subject of her volumes, and from them has resulted a narrative interesting to all, and more particularly interesting to that portion of the community to whom the more refined researches of literature afford pleasure and instruction. The whole work should be read, and no doubt will be read, by all who are anxious for information. It is a lucid arrangement of facts, derived from authentic sources, exhibiting a combination of industry, learning, judgment, and impartiality, not often met with in biographers of crowned heads."

MORNING HERALD.

"A remarkable and truly great historical work. In this series of biographies, in which the severe truth of history takes almost the wildness of romance, it is the singular merit of Miss Strickland that her research has enabled her to throw new light on many doubtful passages, to bring forth fresh facts, and to render every portion of our annals which she has described an interesting and valuable study. She has given a most valuable contribution to the history of England, and we have no hesitation in affirming that no one can be said to possess an accurate knowledge of the history of the country who has not studied this truly national work, which, in this new edition, has received all the aids that further research on the part of the author, and of embellishment on the part of the publishers, could tend to make it still more valuable, and still more attractive, than it had been in its original form."

MORNING CHRONICLE.

"A most valuable and entertaining work. There is certainly no lady of our day who has devoted her pen to so beneficial a purpose as Miss Strickland. Nor is there any other whose works possess a deeper or more enduring interest. Miss Strickland is to our mind the first literary lady of the age."

MORNING POST.

"We must pronounce Miss Strickland beyond all comparison the most entertaining historian in the English language. She is certainly a woman of powerful and active mind, as well as of scrupulous justice and honesty of purpose."

QUARTERLY REVIEW.

"Miss Strickland has made a very judicious use of many authentic MS. authorities not previously collected, and the result is a most interesting addition to our biographical library."

ATHENÆUM.

"A valuable contribution to historical knowledge. It contains a mass of every kind of historical matter of interest, which industry and research could collect. We have derived much entertainment and instruction from the work."

**PUBLISHED FOR HENRY COLBURN
BY HIS SUCCESSORS, HURST AND BLACKETT,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.**

**CHEAP RE-ISSUE OF
EVELYN'S DIARY AND CORRESPONDENCE.**

*Now in course of Publication, in Four Monthly Volumes, crown octavo,
price 6s. each, handsomely bound.*

On the 1st of November was published, printed uniformly with
the last Edition of Pepys' Diary,

**The First Volume of the Re-Issue of the New, Revised, and
Enlarged Edition of the**

**DIARY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF
JOHN EVELYN, F.R.S.**

COMPRISING ALL THE IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL NOTES, LETTERS, AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS, LAST MADE, CONSEQUENT ON THE RE-EXAMINATION OF THE ORIGINAL MS.

"We rejoice to welcome this beautiful and compact edition of Evelyn. It is intended as a companion to the recent edition of Pepys, and presents similar claims to interest and notice. Evelyn was greatly above the vast majority of his contemporaries, and the Diary which records the incidents in his long life, extending over the greater part of a century, is deservedly esteemed one of the most interesting books in the language. Evelyn took part in the breaking out of the civil war against Charles I., and he lived to see William of Orange ascend the throne. Through the days of Strafford and Land, to those of Sancroft and Ken, he was the steady friend of moderation and peace in the English Church. He interceded alike for the royalist and the regicide; he was the correspondent of Cowley, the patron of Jeremy Taylor, the associate and fellow-student of Boyle; and over all the interval between Vandyck and Kneller, between the youth of Milton and the old age of Dryden, poetry and the arts found him an intelligent adviser, and a cordial friend. There are, on the whole, very few men of whom England has more reason to be proud. He stands among the first in the list of Gentlemen. We heartily commend so good an edition of this English classic."—*Examiner*.

"This work, in its present form, is a necessary companion to the popular histories of our country, to Hume, Hallam, Macaulay, and Lingard."—*Sun*.

**Also just ready for Publication,
A New and Improved Library Edition, in Four Volumes, of the
DIARY AND CORRESPONDENCE OF
SAMUEL PEPYS, F.R.S.**

**EDITED, WITH NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL NOTES, BY
RICHARD LORD BRAYBROOKE.**

"The ablest picture of the age in which the writer lived, and a work of standard importance in English literature."—*Athenæum*.

BURKE'S PEERAGE AND BARONETAGE.

A NEW EDITION,

THOROUGHLY REVISED AND CORRECTED THROUGHOUT,
FROM THE PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS OF
THE NOBILITY, &c.

With the ARMS (1500 in number) accurately engraved, and incorporated with the Text.
In 1 vol. (comprising as much matter as twenty ordinary volumes), 88s. bound.

This new edition, which has engaged the author's closest attention for a considerable time, comprises much new and interesting information, and, it is confidently presumed, will be found the most comprehensive, most interesting, and most perfect history of the titled classes ever produced.

BURKE'S HISTORY OF THE LANDED GENTRY.

A Genealogical Dictionary

OF THE WHOLE OF THE UNTITLED ARISTOCRACY OF
ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND:

Comprising Particulars of 100,000 Individuals connected with them.

In 3 volumes, royal 8vo, including the Supplement and Index, beautifully printed in double columns, comprising more matter than 80 ordinary volumes,
price 2*l.* 2*s.*, elegantly bound.

The Landed Gentry of England are so closely connected with the stirring records of its eventful history, that some acquaintance with them is a matter of necessity with the legislator, the lawyer, the historical student, the speculator in politics, and the curious in topographical and antiquarian lore; and even the very spirit of ordinary curiosity will prompt to a desire to trace the origin and progress of those families whose influence pervades the towns and villages of our land. This work furnishes such a mass of authentic information in regard to all the principal families in the kingdom as has never before been attempted to be brought together. It relates to the untitled families of rank, as the "Peerage and Baronetage" does to the titled, and forms, in fact, a peerage of the untitled aristocracy. It embraces the whole of the landed interest, and is indispensable to the library of every gentleman.

BURKE'S DICTIONARY OF THE EXTINCT, DORMANT, & ABEYANT PEERAGES OF ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND.

Beautifully printed, in 1 vol. 8vo, containing 800 double-column pages, 21*s.* bound.

This work, formed on a plan precisely similar to that of Mr. Burke's popular Dictionary of the present Peerage and Baronetage, comprises those peerages which have been suspended or extinguished since the Conquest, particularising the members of each family in each generation, and bringing the lineage, in all possible cases, through either collaterals or females, down to existing houses. It connects, in many instances, the new with the old nobility, and it will in all cases show the cause which has influenced the revival of an extinct dignity in a new creation. It should be particularly noticed; that this new work appertains nearly as much to extant as to extinct persons of distinction; for though dignities pass away, it rarely occurs that whole families do.

MADAME CAMPAN'S MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF MARIE ANTOINETTE.

Cheaper Edition, 2 vols. 8vo, with Portraits, price only 12s. bound.—In French, 7s.

"We have seldom perused so entertaining a work. It is as a mirror of the most splendid Court in Europe, at a time when the monarchy had not been shorn of any of its beams, that is particularly worthy of attention."—*Chronicle*.

LIVES OF THE PRINCESSES OF ENGLAND.

By MRS. EVERETT GREEN,

EDITOR OF THE "LETTERS OF ROYAL AND ILLUSTRIOUS LADIES."

4 vols., post 8vo, with Illustrations, 10s. 6d. each, bound.

"This work is a worthy companion to Miss Strickland's admirable 'Queens of England.' That celebrated work, although its heroines were, for the most part, foreign Princesses, related almost entirely to the history of this country. The Princesses of England, on the contrary, are themselves English, but their lives are nearly all connected with foreign nations. Their biographies, consequently, afford us a glimpse of the manners and customs of the chief European kingdoms, a circumstance which not only gives to the work the charm of variety, but which is likely to render it peculiarly useful to the general reader, as it links together by association the contemporaneous history of various nations. We cordially commend Mrs. Green's production to general attention; it is (necessarily) as useful as history, and fully as entertaining as romance."—*Scot.*

THE LIFE AND REIGN OF CHARLES I.

By I. DISRAELI.

A NEW EDITION. REVISED BY THE AUTHOR, AND EDITED BY HIS SON, THE RT. HON. B. DISRAELI, M.P. 2 vols., 8vo, 28s. bound.

"By far the most important work on the important age of Charles I. that modern times have produced."—*Quarterly Review*.

LIFE OF PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

Second Edition, 1 volume, post 8vo, with Portrait, 10s. 6d. bound.

"We have perused this work with extreme interest. It is a portrait of Talleyrand drawn by his own hand."—*Morning Post*.

MEMOIRS OF HORACE WALPOLE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES,

EDITED BY

ELIOT Warburton.

Cheaper Edition, in 2 vols. 8vo, with Portraits, 16s. bound.

"These Memoirs form a necessary addition to the library of every English gentleman. They nearly complete the chain of mixed personal, political, and literary history, commencing with 'Evelyn' and 'Pepys,' and ending almost in our own day with the histories of Mr. Macaulay and Lord Mahon."—*Standard*.

THE CRESCENT AND THE CROSS; OR, ROMANCE AND REALITIES OF EASTERN TRAVEL.

By ELIOT WARBURTON, Esq.

TENTH EDITION, revised, in 1 vol., with numerous Illustrations, 10s. 6d. bound.

"A book calculated to prove more practically useful was never penned than the 'Crescent and the Cross'—a work which surpasses all others in its homage for the sublime and its love for the beautiful in those famous regions consecrated to everlasting immortality in the annals of the prophets—and which no other modern writer has ever depicted with a pencil at once so reverent and so picturesque."—*Sam.*

LIGHTS AND SHADES OF MILITARY LIFE.

Edited by the late Lieutenant-General Sir CHARLES NAPIER, G.C.B.,
Commander-in-Chief in India, &c. 1 vol., 8vo, 6s. bound.

"Narratives of stirring interest, which should be in the hands of every officer in her Majesty's service."—*Globe.*

ZOOLOGICAL RECREATIONS.

By W. J. BRODERIP, Esq., F.R.S.

CHEAPER EDITION, 1 vol., post 8vo, 6s. bound.

"We believe we do not exaggerate in saying that, since the publication of White's 'Natural History of Selborne,' and of the 'Introduction to Entomology,' by Kirby and Spence, no work in our language is better calculated than the 'Zoological Recreations' to fulfil the avowed aim of its author—to furnish a hand-book which may cherish or awaken a love for natural history."—*Quarterly Review.*

HISTORIC SCENES.

By AGNES STRICKLAND.

Author of "Lives of the Queens of England," &c. 1 vol., post 8vo, elegantly bound, with Portrait of the Author, 10s. 6d.

"This attractive volume is replete with interest. Like Miss Strickland's former works, it will be found, we doubt not, in the hands of youthful branches of a family as well as in those of their parents, to all and each of whom it cannot fail to be alike amusing and instructive."—*Britannia.*

LORD LINDSAY'S LETTERS ON THE HOLY LAND.

FOURTH EDITION, Revised, 1 vol., post 8vo, with Illustrations, 6s. bound.

"Lord Lindsay has felt and recorded what he saw with the wisdom of a philosopher, and the faith of an enlightened Christian."—*Quarterly Review.*

MEMOIRS OF A HUNGARIAN LADY. MADAME PULSZKY.

WRITTEN by HERSELF. 2 vols., 12s. bound.

"Worthy of a place by the side of the Memoirs of Madame de Staël and Madame Campan."—*Globe.*

JAPAN AND THE JAPANESE,

Comprising the Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Japan, with an Account of British Commercial Intercourse with that Country.

By CAPTAIN GOLOWNIN.

NEW and CHEAPER EDITION. 2 vols. post 8vo, 10s. bound.

"No European has been able, from personal observation and experience, to communicate a tenth part of the intelligence furnished by this writer."—*British Review*.

NARRATIVE OF A TWO YEARS' RESIDENCE AT NINEVEH;

With Remarks on the Chaldeans, Nestorians, Yezidees, &c.

By the Rev. J. P. FLETCHER. Two vols., post 8vo, 21s. bound.

NARRATIVE OF THE TEN YEARS' VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY ROUND THE WORLD Of H.M.S. "ADVENTURE" and "BEAGLE," under the command of Captains KING and FITZROY.

Cheaper Edition. 2 large vols., 8vo, with Maps, Charts, and upwards of Sixty Illustrations, by Landseer, and other eminent Artists, bound, 12. 11s. 6d.

Now ready, VOLUME XL, price 5s., of

M. A. THIERS' HISTORY OF FRANCE UNDER NAPOLEON.

A SEQUEL TO HIS HISTORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

* * Care should be taken to order "COLBURN'S AUTHORISED TRANSLATION."

N.B. Any of the volumes may, for the present, be had separately, at 5s. each; and subscribers are recommended to complete their sets as soon as possible, to prevent disappointment.

HISTORY OF THE PENINSULAR WAR.

A COMPANION VOLUME TO MR. GLEIG'S

"STORY OF THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO."

With six Portraits and Map, 5s. bound.

MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE OF

SIR ROBERT MURRAY KEITH, K.B.,

Ambassador at the Courts of Dresden, Copenhagen, and Vienna, with
Biographical Memoirs of

QUEEN CAROLINE MATILDA, SISTER OF GEORGE III.

2 vols., post 8vo, with Portraits, 15s. bound.

"The memoir of this hapless Queen cannot fail deeply to interest the reader."—*Scotsman*.

INTERESTING WORKS.

Just Published, a Cheaper Edition for Circulating Libraries, in 3 vols., price 5s. each, half-bound,

FORTUNE: A STORY OF LONDON LIFE.

By D. T. COULTON, Esq.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

"If our impression be correct, that 'Fortune' is a first fiction, we must speak of its writer as one of promise, power, and passion, from whose future ventures and adventures there is a good deal to be expected."—*Athenæum*.

"A brilliant novel. A more vivid picture of various phases of society has not been painted since 'Vivian Grey' first dazzled and confounded the world; but it is the biting satire of fashionable life, the moral anatomy of high society, which will attract all readers. In every sense of the word, 'Fortune' is an excellent novel."—*Observer*.

"'Fortune' is not a romance, but a novel. All is reality about it: the time, the characters, and the incidents. In its reality consists its charm and its merit. It is, indeed, an extraordinary work, and has introduced to the world of fiction a new writer of singular ability, with a genius more that of Bulwer than any to whom we can compare it."—*Critic*.

REGINALD HASTINGS; AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

By ELIOT WARBURTON. Third and Cheaper Edition, 3 vols., 10s. 6d. bound.

PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF MRS. MARGARET MAITLAND, OF SUNNYSIDE.

WRITTEN by HERSELF. Third and Cheaper Edition, 1 vol., 6s. bound.

"Nothing half so true or so touching in the delineation of Scottish character has appeared since Galt published his 'Annals of the Parish,' and this is purer and deeper than Galt, and even more absolutely and simply true."—*Lord Jeffrey*.

ADVENTURES OF A SOLDIER.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

Being the Memoirs of EDWARD COSTELLO, of the Rifle Brigade, and late Captain in the British Legion. Cheap Edition, with Portrait, 3s. 6d. bound.

"An excellent book of its class. A true and vivid picture of a soldier's life."—*Athenæum*

"This highly interesting volume is filled with details and anecdotes of the most startling character, and well deserves a place in the library of every regiment in the service."—*Naval and Military Gazette*.

NATHALIE: A TALE.

By JULIA KAVANAGH, Author of "Madeline." 3 vols., 15s. bound.

"A tale of most fascinating interest, beautifully told, and abounding in depth of feeling and eloquence of style."—*Sun*.

THE NEW TIMON.

A Poetical Romance. By Sir E. BULWER LYTTON. 1 vol. 5s.

VIOLET, OR THE DANSEUSE.

A Portraiture of Human Passions and Character. 2 vols. 10s.





